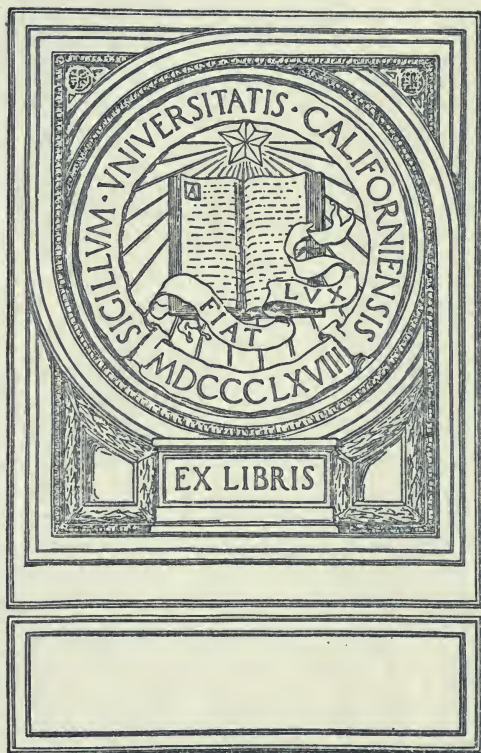


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CHARLES CHESTERFIELD,

OR THE

ADVENTURES

OF A

YOUTH OF GENIUS.

BY

MRS. TROLLOPE,

AUTHIORESS OF

"THE WIDOW BARNABY," "THE WIDOW MARRIED," "MICHAEL
ARMSTRONG," &c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

THE
MUSEUM
OF
NATURAL HISTORY

THE
LIFE AND ADVENTURES
OF
CHARLES CHESTERFIELD.

CHAPTER I.

“Hopes and Fears and Jealous Cares”—Sir George manifests a fine Talent for Romantic Fiction—A *Contrétemps*.

WHEN the letter of Sir George Meddows was delivered to Mr. Dalrymple, it found him, as studious gentlemen are often found, with abundance of books around him, but with his thoughts wandering to scenes wherein their wisdom was not likely to do him much service.

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Dalrymple, as usual, had lounged for an hour in the drawing-room of "his guardian" the preceding evening, and had again found Miss Meddows and Charles Chesterfield as effectually *tête-à-tête* for all purposes of conversation as if the *écarté* table of the baronet and his sister had been in the dining-room. Clara was dressed for a late evening party to which she was going with her aunt, and it struck him that he had never seen her look so surpassingly beautiful before. It struck him also that there was a richer blush on her cheek, and a liquid lustre of greater softness in her eyes than usual. Was it that she could not sit apart, and listen thus alone to the poetic fancies of the lad so strongly ingrafted into the family, without feeling stronger emotions than men under mere ordinary circumstances could excite? This was the only way which occurred to Mr. Dalrymple of accounting for the species of beautiful excitement which he discovered on the countenance of Miss Meddows. Had he been blessed with greater perspicuity of perception, it is possible that other reasons might have suggested themselves for the

“altered mien” of the young lady at the moment his name was announced.

It is hardly fair, perhaps, to spy into the secrets of one so very averse to betraying them herself; but in sad and sober truth Clara had put on her ornaments, and smoothed her raven locks, and approved the effect of her soft muslin robe, with its bordering of gold, under the very disagreeable conviction that the only eyes whose glance she cared for, would not meet hers that night, for Mr. Dalrymple had proclaimed his having a dinner engagement, which was to be followed by the opera, and Mr. Dalrymple had replied to a question from Sir George concerning Mrs. Pomfret’s ball, by stating that he had not the honour of knowing the lady. All this was quite true at the time it was spoken; but at quitting the dinner-table a sort of restlessness came over him which rendered the idea of going to the opera perfectly intolerable, and trusting to the good-nature of the fair ladies he was to join there, for forgiveness of his want of punctuality, he made his escape, and very unex-

pectedly entered the drawing-room of Miss Meddows.

He was revolving all this in no very happy state of spirits, being almost as much annoyed by the self-conviction of the pain his suspicions had caused him, as by the suspicions themselves. Miss Meddows was, in truth, one of the very last young ladies in the world that he would have wished to fall in love with. First, she was the daughter of a man he particularly disliked (though as yet he knew little or nothing about him beyond what was on the surface); secondly, her aunt was a person who never in the course of her conversation brought forward any thing approaching to an idea, without exhibiting an opinion, or a principle, in direct contradiction to his own; thirdly, Clara Meddows had received much of her education abroad, and thus became in some sort identified in his imagination with all that had poisoned his youth, and rendered every thing purely and wholly English so inexpressibly dear to him; fourthly, and lastly, he had, or thought he had, very

good reasons for believing that the heart of the young lady, if indeed a female educated out of England could have a heart, was more likely to bestow itself on any man of his acquaintance than on himself. It is not, therefore, much to be wondered at if, at the moment when he was becoming, almost for the first time, aware that he was not always master of his actions when she was concerned, he should not feel either very well satisfied with himself, or particularly inclined to be compliant and amiable towards others.

Nevertheless, Mr. Dalrymple had no sooner perused the letter of Sir George Meddows, than he suddenly felt all the fogs and mists which were settling very thickly down upon his nerves, vanish and evaporate. He was obliged, absolutely obliged to go to Bruton-street, and that in the character of the most intimate family friend that could be found.

“He has been quarrelling with some one, and has received or sent a challenge,” thought Dalrymple. “Yet that can hardly be either, for he is any thing rather than a quarrelsome man.

But it matters not, I am wanted. It may be that I can be of service to—. Absurd ! I am persuading myself to believe I am a fool. Sir George Meddows was the friend of my grandfather, and whether I like him or not, it is my duty to be useful to him if I can.”

It would have taken longer, he thought, to order his cab, and wait for its being ready, than he should take in getting from Piccadilly to Bruton-street on foot, and he therefore started forth with an eagerness and rapidity of step which augured well for the success of Sir George Meddows’s attack upon his purse.

His sharp, loud knock, announcing an eager visiter, was audible to the anxious baronet’s expectant ears, before he thought it possible that his summons could be obeyed, and it was with surprise, as well as pleasure, that he saw the young man enter the library unannounced, having passed the servant with too quick a step to be overtaken by the measured movement of a polished London serving-man.

“I am here in consequence of your note, Sir George,” he said, extending his hand with more

cordiality than usual; "nothing unpleasant has happened to you I hope? But at any rate I shall be most happy if I can be useful."

"Thank you, heartily, my dear fellow," returned the baronet, with an animated smile. "It is worth while to be plagued a little for the sake of proving the kindness of such a friend as yourself, Arthur. No, thank God! nothing very terrible has happened; and yet, as brother Jonathan says, I am in an unhandsome fix, though a very little help will get me out of it. But sit down, sit down, my dear Arthur. I hope you are not in a red-hot hurry to be gone, for to do the thing correctly I must begin at the beginning, and after we have got through this bore of a business, Clara shall give us some luncheon. You are not in a very great hurry, are you?"

"Not at all, Sir George, only that I am eager to know in what way I can be useful to you."

"Now then, I will tell you all the facts—but take care that you do not blame my pretty Clara, for I could not bear *that*—though beyond all denying she is the cause of my present embar-

rassment. A few months ago, I protest I forget the exact time, a poor woman whom Clara had employed in some way or other—she was a dressmaker, I believe—came here in the most bitter distress imaginable. Her husband, who was a house-carpenter, had been arrested at the suit of a timber-merchant, for materials consumed in building a mansion for a distinguished nobleman,—think of that, Dalrymple—think of the infamy of it!—from whom he could not obtain a single farthing in payment. There was a large family—the old story, you know. However, it was only too manifest that utter ruin must fall upon a set of very estimable poor creatures if this man was suffered to go to prison. His creditor agreed to take a bill, if it were respectably endorsed, and with this lamentable history in her mouth, and abundance of tears in her eyes, *voilà ma belle Clara* almost falling at my feet to make me endorse the bill. Of course I ought not to have done it, I am quite aware of that now, and so is she too, poor girl, and miserable enough she is, dear child, to atone for a heavier fault. But see the sequel. The poor

carpenter is dead, and the timber-merchant has sent me his attorney this morning with the bill, which has become due, accompanied with the most insulting threats of an instant execution in the house if it be not taken up before four o'clock to-day. "Imagine the condition of poor Clara! Can you help me, Arthur? The bill is for—for nine hundred and fifty pounds. Of course I need not tell you that the debt shall not be of long standing."

"You cannot doubt, Sir George, that I shall have great pleasure in affording you this accommodation," replied Dalrymple; and after a moment's consideration, he added, "the readiest mode, I think, will be for you to use a part of the money which you hold as my guardian. Of course I do not mean that I shall look for the repayment of it at the moment of my second majority, I am quite aware that this period is too near to render such an arrangement any accommodation at all. You are welcome to keep this sum exactly as long as you may require it, and my only part in the transaction will consist in my giving you a receipt which shall include it, at

our approaching settlement. Pray let the mind of your daughter be set at rest upon this subject directly. My part of the transaction is a matter of not the slightest inconvenience to me."

Almost from the moment at which Mr. Dalrymple began speaking, Sir George had been troubled by a fit of sneezing, which rendered it necessary that he should bury his face in his pocket-handkerchief, and when he ceased, necessary as it was for the baronet to answer him, he could by no means stop the troublesome attack altogether. He shook his head, however, in a manner which very plainly expressed disapprobation, and at length found breath enough to say, with much energy, and tolerable distinctness,

"No, Arthur, no. Positively I will not do that. You have no notion, my dear fellow, what sort of a transaction it is which you are proposing to me. Draw out the trust-money? No, upon my soul, I will not, though Clara should be left without a bed to lie upon, from my refusing to do it. No, by Heaven, I will not do it!"

“Forgive me, Sir George,” replied the young man, colouring; “you are quite right in saying that I know not the nature of the transaction. Most assuredly I did not, if it be of a kind that could give you the slightest pain or mortification of any kind; but I should have thought that if my signature were added to yours, the business could be done without either difficulty or delay of any kind.”

“Just making the matter ten thousand times worse, Arthur. Your signature being in truth of no use whatever in such a transaction. No, my dear Dalrymple, if that is all you can do, why Clara must be contented to see her trinkets and her trumpery go to the hammer. Dear creature! she will be the first to allow that it is her own fault, and I well know that she will bear it like a heroine.”

“But I shall have no difficulty, none whatever, Sir George, in settling this business in another manner,” exclaimed Dalrymple, hastily. “Permit me to return home for my check-book, and the business can be done at once.”

“Nay, my dear fellow,” returned the gay Sir

George, recovered from his fit of sneezing, and, as it seemed, from all other annoyances whatever, "there is no need to give you that trouble; we bank at the same house, Dalrymple, and my check-book may serve you."

Before he had quite ended these words, a drawer was unlocked, the check torn out and laid before the young man, and a pen ready charged with ink, placed between his fingers."

"In whose name shall I draw it?" demanded Dalrymple.

"In mine, Arthur, if you will. I should not choose the name of this rascally attorney to be mixed with yours."

"And the amount?"

"Nine hundred and fifty. Thank you! Thank you a thousand times, Arthur! Poor Clara! what a relief will this be to her! But you must let me communicate it, and do not speak to her on the subject, Dalrymple! She could not—poor thing! I know it would overcome her dreadfully."

"Sir George," replied Dalrymple, in very evident agitation, "this transaction cannot be con-

cluded without my exacting one condition from you. I must entreat you to promise me that Miss Meddows shall never be made acquainted with my part in it. Will you promise this? Indeed, indeed, you must not refuse me."

"It is rather a whimsical request, Arthur, is it not? However, of course, I must obey your will, if such it be," replied Sir George with a shrug.

"I thank you, sir. I am very greatly obliged to your compliance," was the reply of Dalrymple.

"Well then, now we will go together, shall we, to the dining-room; the luncheon is always punctual in this house, if nothing else is, and for the very excellent and ever-effective reason, that the servants' dinner follows it. We shall find the ladies there already, I doubt not."

"I will pay my compliments to Miss Meddows and the luncheon willingly," replied the young man, while his heart throbbed as he remembered that if her matchless brow showed traces of trouble and anxiety, he should have the delight of knowing, as he looked at her,

that the cause had passed away, and by his means, though she should never be embarrassed by knowing it.

“But the attorney?” said Dalrymple, as they approached the dining-room door; “for goodness sake take care that you are not too late for him, Sir George! Let us be careful that Miss Meddows has no further alarm.”

“Fear nothing on that score. The rascal is in the house. I will only perform the office of usher to you, Arthur, and settle the business with him in a moment.”

“Pray do not stand upon such ceremony. If Miss Meddows has already descended, I may venture to announce myself, may I not?”

“Do so, then, my dear fellow. I will join you in a moment.” And well pleased to be thus released, Sir George Meddows returned with a light heart, and a rapid step to his library, to settle what was still to be done, before the detestable Mr. Cromwell could be dismissed.

Had not the irresistible temptation assailed him of getting into his pocket, in the dear shape of ready money, the difference between seven

hundred and eighty-five pounds and nine hundred and fifty, the remainder of the business would have been very easily despatched. As it was, he was obliged to submit to the trouble both of transmitting Dalrymple's check to the bankers, and drawing another himself for his sturdy creditor. But he submitted to it with the utmost good humour, and having crossed his ward's check and sent it off, he despatched a servant to the retreat of Mr. Cromwell with orders to show him again into the library, where he was reseated in great state to receive him.

Mr. Cromwell was, in his way, as bright a genius as Sir George Meddows, and no sooner did he cast his eyes on the baronet than he felt assured that his wily debtor no longer feared him, and that his money, somehow or other, was within reach. His own deportment therefore immediately changed as perceptibly as that of the high and mighty gentleman before whom he stood—no pair of scales were ever more nicely balanced. As Sir George grew more and more sternly dignified, Mr. Cromwell became

more and more obsequious. Nevertheless, though the change was no doubt piquant and agreeable enough, the gay baronet was exceedingly sick of the sight of him ; and having indulged himself with one look, very literally *de haut en bas*, at the bowing money-lender, he once again drew forth his book of checks, drew for the sum required, and having signed his name and torn out the page, laid his extended palm upon it as if he feared its being snatched at by his companion, and uttered with an emphasis which displayed considerable dignity,

“The bill, sir, if you please.”

There was no unnecessary delay in the production of this instrument, and Sir George having by the intervention of the fire-tongs conveyed it to the centre of the fire, and held it there till it was evident that not even Mr. Cromwell could use it further, he once more turned his eyes upon that bowing individual, and said,

“I am busy, sir, and the sooner you permit me to be alone, the better.”

“I hope, Sir George, that you will not take amiss any thing that has passed to-day. I wouldn't

on any account whatever offend any gentleman if it was possible any how to avoid it ; but you see, Sir George—" And the money-lender paused with a penitent and humble look.

The baronet rang the bell sharply, and the ready William was in an instant before him.

"The door," pronounced with a certain intonation perfectly intelligible to the domestic (and probably to the visiter), caused that accomplished functionary, first to throw wide the portal, and then so to place himself relatively to the personage he was about to wait upon, as to render it very evident, that if he did not instantly avail himself of the means of *exit* thus provided, he should consider it as his duty to make him do so, by some very summary process.

It entered not into Mr. Cromwell's tactics to offer any further opposition, but bowing very reverentially as he passed out, he disappeared without uttering another word ; leaving his customer in the happiest possible state of spirits, and by no means displeased that the interview had ended at last, without any such violent

demonstration of disgust on either part, as must have rendered any future one impossible.

While this was going on in the library, Mr. Dalrymple pursued his way to the dining-room. It was long since he had felt so happy as he did at the moment when he extended his hand to open the door. For that moment, at least, his self-reproaches, his struggles, and his resolutions were forgotten. He remembered only that he had been useful to Clara, and that he should have the delight of knowing that the sorrow he expected to read in her dark, thoughtful eye, existed no longer. For one moment then he paused to enjoy this delightful thought, and in the next she stood before him, blushing, agitated, and lovelier than ever—but—with her extended hand resting on that of Charles Chesterfield !

Had the shock been less violent, it would have made him retreat, but as it was, all power of thought and action seemed to have left him, and he stood rooted to the floor with his distended eyes fixed upon her, in unutterable astonishment and dismay.





"He stood, rooted to the floor, with his distended eyes fixed upon her."

And how came it that Clara's hand was resting upon that of Charles Chesterfield? Terrible was the effect, nothing could be more innocent than the cause.

She had witnessed the manner in which, during breakfast, her father had drawn from his little purse the half-sovereign and four shillings (for she had keenly watched the transaction) and had instantly made up her mind to find or make an early opportunity of repaying him. It was with this view that she had descended to the dining-room a few minutes earlier than usual, determined if the young man obeyed her father's intimation that he was to come to luncheon, that she would make use of the first moment possible for effecting her purpose.

Charles had in effect entered the room almost at the same moment as herself, and after permitting him to indulge his growing courage by answering a few of his questions, she suddenly drew from her bag a bit of paper in which the exact sum was enveloped, and said, "By the way, Mr. Chesterfield, I have it in charge to repay you what you lent to my father this morn-

cheerful. She had just performed a necessary but disagreeable task. She expected to see Mr. Dalrymple at her party in the evening ; and now he had made his appearance without being expected at all ! Poor Clara looked positively happy as she held out her hand to welcome him ; and considering that, according to her father's statement, she was perfectly aware of the tremendous embarrassment which she herself had caused, and totally ignorant of the assistance by which it had been removed, it can hardly be wondered at, if the sensitive young man felt more surprised than pleased by her gaiety, or if the cruel thought occurred, that a woman more perfectly English in her education, would have felt and behaved differently. How much the presence of Charles Chesterfield, and the recollection of Clara's hand extended towards him, might have increased the severity of the judgment which he thus passed upon her, it might be difficult to say ; but it is certain that his manner became so cold both to the lady and gentleman, that Charles felt the gratitude which was rising

to his lips fall back, as it were, into his bosom, and the gaiety of Clara passed away like a gleam of April sunshine before a heavy cloud.

CHAPTER II.

An Evening Party—An European Celebrity—a Treaty on the basis of Reciprocal Advantages—"La dolce Lingua"—Charles is Exposed to a new Danger.

AT the usual hour for assembling together the population of metropolitan drawing-rooms, those of Clara began to fill; nor was it long before that indescribable sound was heard through them, which, like the gurgling of the waves upon a pebbly shore, shows that the tide is in.

Mr. and Mrs. Gibson, Miss Almeria, and Miss Theodosia were among the first who entered: for though they chose to be "*very distinguished people*," Mrs. Gibson piqued her-

self on having raised her whole family to that position, without having condescended to adopt any of the more ordinary modes of obtaining it. Mrs. Gibson knew perfectly well that "*very distinguished people*" who are not born to greatness, but achieve it, make the appearing exceedingly late, wherever they are expected to appear at all, a constant habit, cheap in adoption, and productive of considerable effect. So far the practice might certainly have suited her well, and she might have been tempted to adopt it, had it not militated against her very nature, by keeping her quiet when she had the means of being in a bustle; out of sight when she might be looked at, and out of hearing when she had a chance of being listened to. The Gibson family were, therefore, always early; for, as every body who had the pleasure of Mrs. Gibson's acquaintance knew, her will was law, and it was her will that so it should be.

Neither Sir George nor Mrs. Longuéville had entered the room when they arrived; the former being still engaged in sipping claret with

two gentlemen who had dined with him, and the latter stretched full-dressed on a sofa in her bedroom, half asleep, and half listening to the tittle-tattle of her French maid. But Charles Chesterfield was there, dressed in a town-made suit, according to the orders of Sir George, and looking so happy and so handsome, that what with his appearance, and the aristocratic domicile in which he appeared—the absence of more important objects, and the recollection of his publishing propensities, Mrs. Gibson seized upon him with an affectionate familiarity that made his heart bound with gratitude, and placed him as nearly at his ease as it was possible for him to be, at this his second appearance in public, and his first in a style of dress entirely new to him.

“What a treat it is to catch you for a moment before your rooms are full, dearest Clara !” exclaimed Almeria, as she pressed the hand of Miss Meddows to her bosom with both her own ; rousing her courage to this very familiar address, for the sake of displaying to her mother and

sister the terms on which she stood with her elegant friend. "What an age, dear friend, has it appeared to me since we met last!"

Nothing could be much more unmeaning than the absent smile with which Clara received this address; but it mattered not, it did exceedingly well for Miss Almeria, who replied to it by saying with a sigh,

"Ah! that smile, dear friend! What volumes it speaks! Yes—you are right—quite right, dear! What I would say to you is for the boudoir, and not for the drawing-room. *Attendons, attendons, chère amie!*"

"And what have you been doing since we parted?" said Mrs. Gibson, laying her fan caressingly on the shoulder of Charles. "What would I not give to be in your confidence, fully in your confidence, Mr. Chesterfield! I have it from the very best, the very best and highest authority—you may guess whom I mean—that there is that within you which will blaze forth ere long, and astonish us all," and she touched her forehead significantly as she spoke. Poor Charles! This was indeed fooling him to the top of his

bent ; he felt halfway to paradise, and giving way to the titillating excitement, he permitted the energetic lady to lead him off to a distant sofa, where he actually recited to her enraptured ear a sonnet to the river Wade ; a brisk little trout-stream on whose banks he had culled cowslips for Bessy, before the hope of ever conversing with a literary London lady had visited him, even in his dreams. It is true his voice trembled, but he recited the lines distinctly.

“I have no words, upon my honour, Mr. Chesterfield ; I am at a loss how to express to you the emotions you have made me feel !” exclaimed Mrs. Gibson. “Oh ! what exquisite enjoyment it is for a mind like mine to meet a talent so rich and rare, and a spirit so perfectly *unbluzé* ! You must forgive me, Mr. Chesterfield, if you now and then catch me making a new word, when I can find no old one to suit me. Poetic licence is granted, you know, even by the severest academies, and why may not an *expression* licence, as I call it, be accorded to those whose thoughts are too copious to find

sufficient vent in our ordinary vocabulary ? Would it not be tyranny to deny it to us ?”

“ Indeed I think so,” replied Charles, by no means disposed to differ on any subject with so kind a friend, though utterly at a loss to guess what *unblazé* might be.

“ You will come to me on Tuesday evening without fail ? Don’t forget my Tuesdays, Mr. Chesterfield ! every Tuesday till the end of the season, I shall receive, *sans faute*, and I shall decidedly quarrel with you if you forget it.” It was with much greater sincerity than such speeches are usually made, that Charles assured her it would be impossible he should ever forget an invitation of hers, and that Tuesday would never be a red-letter day to him.

While this was going on in one part of the room, Theodosia was examining the music-books in another ; while her father, being very particularly disengaged, endeavoured to assist her, though in doing so, he had to endure many strong, though very affectionate reprimands, concerning various little defects in his style.

“ Dearest papa !” exclaimed the young lady,

“never, while you live, open a music-book in that manner! It is a perfect atrocity, upon my honour it is. Take care, my dear pet papa, what you are about. Don’t mix the songs and concertos together! I suppose I shall be expected to play, and I shall be lost if you do. For goodness sake, dear, do put your gloves on! You have no idea how horribly vulgar you look. Mercy on me, dear! What would become of you without me?”

Almeria, meanwhile, was displaying towards Clara an affection that really seemed to have no bounds, till at length Sir George Meddows and his dinner guests entered, and then a change came over her. The rooms were now getting full, and it became easy enough for a skilful young lady to win her way towards any part of them which she happened to like best, without exciting any troublesome degree of attention. Mrs. Longuéville had by this time emerged from her retreat, and swam through the apartments with a movement as soft as that of her own plumes, enjoying as she passed along all the consequence of being at home, while she left all the trouble

of it to her niece. For this tall and stately body, who was ever peculiarly austere in her deportment towards young female pretenders, unless their claims were supported by the right divine of rank or fashion, Miss Almeria Gibson entertained the most peculiar aversion, and she avoided her path with very excellent pilotage. But the skill of her movements was not confined to the avoiding one particular track, it showed itself at least equally well in the manner in which she persued another. Sir George rambled on, purposely making his path as devious as possible, for the purpose of distributing civil words as far and wide as he could before he sat down to his whist-table; but however varied the direction in which he moved, the roving eye of Almeria was upon him, and exactly as often as it was possible for her to do so without danger of startling the quarry, she was at hand to say some of those graceful, lively, captivating little speeches by which young ladies, in the style of Miss Almeria, venture to propitiate and attract gentlemen

of fifty. At length, however, his public duty being performed, he ventured to give himself to his private amusement; and, as usual, making his own party set down to pass the next three or four hours at whist. Scarcely had he established himself in this haven of his wishes, ere the fair Almeria contrived to find a chair behind him, which she drew so close, that her chin almost touched his shoulder.

“Don’t send me away, Sir George!” she said in a soft yet playful voice. “I dote upon whist! and, moreover, I always bring luck to those I wish it for,” she added, in his ear. “So do not chase me.”

“Chase you!” he replied. “Nay, pray sit closer to me, Miss Almeria! Closer still! I assure you that I now feel invincible.”

She did sit close to him, very close, and such flattering delight did she display when things went well with him, and so deep was the soft sigh that fanned his cheek when he lost the odd trick, or had honours counted against him, that upon one occasion when his partner was deal-

ing, he left his chair, and making his way to an idle gossiping personage at some distance, he said in his ear,

“Can you tell me, Marshal, which of the Gibson girls it is who has got the fortune? Is it Almeria? That one I mean who is sitting yonder?”

“Yes, yes, it is Almeria,” replied the person he addressed, who was one of those from whom no one ever received, in answer to an inquiry, the dull reply, “I don’t know;” rather than be supposed not to know every thing, Mr. Marshal would have affirmed any thing. So Sir George went back to his card-table under the persuasion that the fair nymph so decidedly well-disposed towards him, was the independent possessor of twenty thousand pounds, and one whom it might be exceedingly well worth while to think about.

While these matters proceeded in the tranquillity of the inner room, a good deal of sensation was excited in the outer one, by the name of MRS. SHERBOURNE, very audibly announced at the door of it. Every eye turned towards

the spot where she was expected to appear, but it was still a minute or two before she became visible; and during this interval, Mrs. Gibson, with her arm resting on that of young Chesterfield, made her way to the place where Miss Meddows stood ready to receive her celebrated guest, determined to be within reach of an immediate presentation.

“This is quite an European celebrity, Mr. Chesterfield,” she said, strenuously dragging him forward. “We must get Miss Meddows to present us before she is too much surrounded. I have never yet made her acquaintance, and it is rather an object to me. When she finds out our intimacy with Marchmont, of course she will be at our feet—or, if not, must pay the penalty. You can guess what that is, Mr. Chesterfield, can’t you? Though happily no such danger is before you.”

“You must forgive my country ignorance, Mrs. Gibson,” replied Charles, though without blushing half so much as he would have done a week before; for he was improving rapidly. “But to say the truth, I do not know what you

mean by having to pay a penalty. Will you explain it?"

"It might frighten some young authors to death," replied Mrs. Gibson, laughing. "Nevertheless, I may venture to tell *you*, because you are one of us, and quite out of danger, I hope. But the penalty of not standing well with Mr. Marchmont is utter destruction, believe me, to all literary hopes—except in some very out-of-the-way cases indeed, where nothing good or bad seems to make any difference. But speaking in general, nobody can have any hope of getting on if Marchmont is against him. Never forget that, my dear young friend, whatever you do. The sun has not more certain power of giving light, than Marchmont has of giving fame—or blasting it."

"Is it possible," said Charles, looking a little dismayed, "that the neglect of one distinguished man can produce such withering effects?"

"His *neglect*?" rejoined Mrs. Gibson, shaking her head mysteriously. "I don't quite say that—but here she comes! Good gracious! how

little she is ! And perfectly a Frenchwoman in appearance, isn't she ? I am enchanted ! How very eccentric ! How perfectly *distinguée* ! How odd !”

This description was so just, that it requires little addition. Mrs. Sherbourne was certainly one of the smallest women in existence, and all that dress could do to make her look unlike an Englishwoman, had been done.

“ Introduce me, I entreat you !” cried Mrs. Gibson, in the ear of Clara, as the pale, large eyed, little lady drew near. “ I am absolutely dying to make her acquaintance !”

Miss Meddows received her remarkable-looking visiter very gracefully, but was almost startled out of her wonted equanimity by the manner in which she was addressed in return.

“ Mais c'est une éternité !” exclaimed Mrs. Sherbourne, seizing her two hands, and kissing her first on one cheek and then on the other,—
“ mais c'est une éternité depuis que je vous ai vu !”

“ It is indeed a long time,” replied Clara,

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The European Celebrity.

quietly. "It is three years, is it not, since you left Paris for Rome? Nay, more than that, it is nearly four."

"Le moyen de conter un tel interval!" cried Mrs. Sherbourne, raising her prodigiously large eyes towards heaven, and still holding Clara's imprisoned hands pressed closely to her bosom.

"I hope you have not quite lost the power of speaking English, my dear Mrs. Sherbourne," said Miss Meddows, smiling, "or we shall get on very badly, for I have totally lost the habit of speaking any thing else—and I know not, if I shall be able to understand you."

"Come! anche la bella lingua! non e possibile!" replied Mrs. Sherbourne, in an accent of despair.

"All *linguas* but my own I do assure you," returned Clara, laughing. "But every body here, you know, understands English, so I manage very well." Mrs. Sherbourne said nothing in reply, but sighed deeply, and dropped the young lady's hands without again pressing them to her heart.

"Give me leave, Mrs. Sherbourne, to intro-

duce Mrs. Gibson to you," said Clara. She is exceedingly desirous of making your acquaintance."

It was impossible Miss Meddows could have taken a more favourable moment for the purpose. There was something so nearly approaching to adoration in the look and attitude of Mrs. Gibson, as she drew near to second the motion, that the miniature muse felt soothed and comforted after the shock of finding that she was expected to restrain the expression of her feelings to the homely idiom of her native land; and when Mrs. Gibson, seizing with a powerful arm upon two vacant chairs, placed one for the little celebrity, and the other for herself, they sat down together, not vulgarly side by side, but intellectually, face to face, with almost an equal desire of being irresistibly agreeable. When Mrs. Gibson dropped the arm of Charles in order to be presented to the star of the evening—a luminary generally more bright, though less tranquil than the evening star—he had remained exactly where she left him transfixed, as it seemed, by the apparition

of this new "European celebrity;" and after the first burst of that eloquence was over, which always wells forth from such a soul as Mrs. Gibsons, at the approach of any body who has published a great many works, he had the unspeakable delight of being beckoned forward by his generous friend, and presented to Mrs. Sherbourne as one of the most promising literary debutants of the age. Mrs. Sherbourne raised, and fixed her great eyes upon him with a vast deal of kindness.

"Astrologers read destiny in the stars, and poets read poetry in the eyes," said she. "In both cases the lore is occult. Caviare to the multitude! Is it not so, dear sir?"

As Charles smiled, blushed, and said nothing, Mrs. Gibson answered for him.

"Oh! what a thought! and how expressed!" she exclaimed. "Is not this happiness, Mr Chesterfield? To welcome such a spirit as this back to its native land! To catch almost the first notes that fall from the lips of the siren, before the eager, listening, expectant world has

seized and wrapped her in its multitudinous embrace! To me it is ecstasy. I have no words to paint it. Alas! when the heart is full, how treacherously disobedient is the tongue, ever refusing to find words for its too eloquent master! Fly, and take possession of that vacant chair, Chesterfield. Place yourself there, and let us listen to her."

"Your kindness, my dear madam," said Mrs. Sherbourne, meekly, "is most welcome to my feelings. There is something fearfully trying to a mimosa-like mind such as mine, in returning from the warm and sunny light of Italy, to the atmosphere of our chill isle! To intelligence such as yours, I need scarcely say that I speak figuratively, as well as literally. You have been in Italy?"

"Alas, never!" returned Mrs. Gibson, with a sort of flashing eye that seemed to accuse somebody of having done something to cause the unnatural restraint which had withheld her.

"Nor you, young friend?" demanded the gifted lady, turning towards Charles; but his

tongue being evidently in the rebellious humour described by Mrs. Gibson, he only replied by expressively shaking his head.

“Nay then, you know not how much I want your kindness!” resumed the plaintive star. “Could you but imagine the warmth, the enthusiasm of dear classic Italy, for all that appertains to mind, you would understand it better. It is very trying—fearfully trying,” and she pressed her swelling heart with her little hands, “for—why should I scruple to pronounce the word?—for a poet, to travel from Italy to England as fast as post-horses can carry him! Oh!” she added, with a visible shudder, “it is so like climbing amidst glaciers, after luxuriating in a valley rich in sunshine, and enamelled with flowers of a thousand dyes. So like changing day for night, and light for darkness.”

“Where is the bold reasoner that would venture to say it is not so!” replied Mrs. Gibson, looking as if she were very much ashamed of having been born in England: but after a moment’s pause, she added, as if wishing to plead for pardon in the case of herself and her

particular friends, under a disgrace to which they were forced to plead guilty. "Yet do not think, do not, I implore you, conceive for a moment, that even England will be insensible to the glory and happiness of possessing you again. No! it will not, it cannot be so! I can answer at least for our small circle, a circle not perhaps the least remarkable of the many formed by the converging intelligences of this great metropolis, and one in the centre of which I trust that Mrs. Sherbourne will often condescend to shine."

Mrs. Sherbourne bowed, and said with her eyes, "What is it you mean? Explain yourself, dear flattering friend."

"I speak with all humility of the literary society which assembles every Tuesday evening at my house in Baker-street," replied Mrs. Gibson; "believe me, my dear Mrs. Sherbourne, you will be received with an ovation there. I have four daughters, who adore your name; and Mr. Gibson also, who in his way is one of the best of men, and to do him justice, worships, though at a distance, the intellectual

lights among which he lives, venerates your reputation, and will zealously assist his family to welcome you as you deserve."

"I am deeply grateful," replied Mrs. Sherbourne, in an accent of great sensibility, "deeply grateful to you all."

"Oh, speak not thus! the gratitude will all be ours! But I rejoice to say that in my drawing-rooms you will meet with one to whom I will not scruple to confess, it is an advantage to be known. The name of Marchmont can hardly be a stranger to your ears, Mrs. Sherbourne? You must have heard of Mr. Marchmont?"

"I blush to say that many of the most illustrious among my countrymen are as yet unknown to me," replied the celebrity. "My residence abroad has been so long, and I have so exclusively devoted myself to studying the genius of the various nations among whom I have lived, that I have still all to learn at home."

"Of Mr. Marchmont's importance in the literary world of London, you will soon become

aware," replied Mrs. Gibson: "when I tell you that he is the editor of *The Regenerator*, I give you a key that will enable you very soon to comprehend the value of his friendship. It is a name that carries both hope and fear with it."

"The editor of *The Regenerator*! Are you intimate with him, my dear madam?" demanded Mrs. Sherbourne, in a tone that showed a good deal of newly-awakened interest.

"Intimate?" returned Mrs. Gibson with a triumphant smile; "I am proud to say that he almost lives with us!"

"You will indeed do me a great favour by making me known to him," said Mrs. Sherbourne, anxiously. "If I mistake not, *The Regenerator* has a weekly article upon the theatre?"

"Why, as to that," said Mrs. Gibson, with a very expressive little laugh, "I think I could let you into a secret. The fact is," she continued, lowering her voice, "that from Sir Everard Little downwards, there is not a single dramatist at the present time who dare venture a piece, till he has privately given them his opi-

nion of it, or at least the promise of a favouring word."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Mrs. Sherbourne, speaking without any lisp, drawl, or foreign grace whatever. "Every thing for me depends upon the success of the piece which I have just got accepted at Drury-lane! For Heaven's sake, my dear madam, tell me what I had better do about it? Does your friend Mr. Marchmont read all the pieces in manuscript before they are acted?"

"Oh, Heavens! no—he writes immensely, you know."

"Then how is it to be managed? How may I propitiate him?"

"I am sure it will give me the greatest pleasure in the world, my dear Mrs. Sherbourne, to be in any degree useful to you," replied Mrs. Gibson, assuming her best patronizing tone, and seeming to enjoy the finding herself quite at ease again, after the fatigue of paying her court to the "European celebrity."

"I cannot thank you enough. Tuesday? your evening is Tuesday? I suppose it would

be impossible for me to see him before? Yet I should greatly wish it. Do you think it would be impossible?"

"Impossible? Oh no, certainly not impossible for any friend of mine. He is *répandu* beyond any thing you can conceive; but I have little doubt that if I make a point of it, he will meet you any evening you will name, if you will make the meeting-place my drawing-room."

"Good heavens! how kind, how generously kind to a stranger," said the delighted celebrity, seizing the hand of her new friend. "Will you promise to tell me in what way I can show my gratitude? There is nothing I would not do to prove how deeply I feel your kindness."

"My dear Mrs. Sherbourne, I am one of those who when they take a fancy, never spare exertion and energy to prove the sincerity of it. Your works have delighted us, and, beyond all doubt, the personal introduction with which I have been favoured this evening is greatly calculated to increase the interest they have

indiscreet, tell me if you are provided with this essential auxiliary."

"Ah! that I am not," returned the little lady, mournfully.

"Mr. Chesterfield! draw near," said Mrs. Gibson, in a half-whisper. "Tell me, young friend, think you not that, under the presiding eye of our friend Marchmont, you could compose a prologue for Mrs. Sherbourne's new play? Such a one as might be advantageous to her, and honourable to yourself?"

"I should be delighted to attempt it," replied Charles, eagerly. "Is it a tragedy, Mrs. Sherbourne, or a comedy?"

"It is rather difficult to answer the question, Mr. Chesterfield," replied Mrs. Sherbourne, rolling her eyes in a wandering, doubtful glance, which spoke both indecision and genius, "It must, I think be classed as neither, but content itself with the safer, because less-defined title of 'a Drama.' Will you really have the excessive kindness to produce a prologue for me?"

"I will certainly make the attempt, ma'am,"

he repeated, "and should Mr. Marchmont think it worthy of your acceptance, I shall feel very happy indeed—nothing could give me greater pleasure."

"How can I thank you? Do you think it would amuse you to attend my rehearsals, Mr. Chesterfield? Speak freely."

What a question was this? Would it amuse him? Excepting the having a play of his own to watch through the delicious process of adaptation to the stage, the imagination of Charles Chesterfield could hardly have suggested any thing he should like one-hundredth part as well. Though he was making very rapid progress in his metropolitan education, it was still impossible for him altogether to conceal the rapture this question occasioned him, and his voice almost trembled with delight, as he replied,

"I know nothing in the world that I should like so well. There is nothing I would not attempt to obtain it, Mrs. Sherbourne."

"*Eh bene! Sono felicissima!* We will make a bargain then. You shall write a prologue for

me, and I will take you to my rehearsals. *N'est pas? C'est une affaire finie.*"

Poor Charles would have been very thankful if Mrs. Sherbourne could have managed to speak to him in English. But far too happy from what he did understand, to complain of what he did not, he thanked her with all the glowing grace of sincerity, and determined to retire early, for the purpose of sketching a prologue before he went to rest. The party however being large and, as it seemed to him, very brilliant, he thought he would indulge himself before he went by gazing on the gay scene from a snug retreat which he had found on a neglected chair behind the door. Inexpressibly happy from the employment given him, and the reward promised for it, he was quite unconscious of any mortification from being alone and neglected. The Gibsons, particularly the three ladies, all came with the determination of being exceedingly civil to him, but excepting during the scene above described, they had all forgotten it. Miss Almeria was very much engaged indeed at the card-table; where, since

the short absence of Sir George, during which he had acquired the important false information above stated, her *petits soins* had been met by so much gratitude, and returned with such liberal interest, that it was quite impossible she could think of any thing else. Mr. Gibson, though theoretically preferring intellectual conversation to every thing else in the world, was nevertheless practically fond of a rubber when he could get it, and was positively enjoying the honour of playing at the same table as the elegant Mrs. Longuéville. When Charles withdrew himself, and his joy, from the side of the celebrity and Mrs. Gibson, the two ladies continued to converse together very affectionately, interrupted only by such introductions to the authoress as the weary Clara was specially requested to perform. At length, however, finding Mrs. Sherbourne's oblivion of her own language, and partiality for that of Italy increased as the crowd thickened round her, Mrs. Gibson, moved by that strong principle of our nature, maternal love, called her Theodosia to her side, feeling that it was impossible she

should ever have a more admirable opportunity of displaying the accomplishment in which she was so pre-eminent, than the present.

“Permit me,” she said, “to present to you my daughter, Theodosia, Mrs. Sherbourne. Her passion for the sweet language of Italy equals your own. You will find but few in England, I fear, as capable as she is of appreciating your beautiful accent.”

“Ah! she speaks Italian? That will indeed be a relief to me!” replied Mrs. Sherbourne, plaintively, “*Cara mia signora! ho avuto impedimenti incredibili per trovarmi un’amica come voi! Parleremo dunque, sempre, sempre parleremo in questa dolce idioma ch’entrambi amiámo così.*”

Though a little startled by the closeness of the attack upon her parts of speech, Theodosia was determined to sustain her Tuscan reputation, and perceiving that Mrs. Sherbourne’s looks were very affectionate, she replied exactly in the tender accent her music-master had taught her, “*Caro tesoro mio!*”

The celebrity looked puzzled, but suddenly

fancying, or remembering, that some sonnet or canzone opened with these words, she presumed that her new friend was about to regale her with a little splendid recitation, and assuming a poetical look, one-fourth criticism and three-fourths ecstasy, she exclaimed, "Ah ! non arres tarvi!"

"Vorrei, ma non vorrei," replied Theodosia, very cleverly.

"Ma si, carissima ! Andate sempre vi prego ! La poesia é l' atmosfera nella quale respiro con piacere sovrano !"

This exquisite dialogue was interrupted by an acquaintance of Mrs. Gibson's, a sensible-looking old gentleman, who came up to her chair to pay his compliments to her, and remained for a minute or two behind it to listen to the unknown tongue that assailed his ears.

"That's a foreign lady, I presume, ma'am ?" he said, addressing Mrs. Gibson. "Pray what country may she come from ?"

"Delicious !" cried Mrs. Gibson, joyously clapping her hands. "Do listen to this immense compliment, my dear Mrs. Sherbourne. Mr. Allanby, one of the cleverest men in the

world, has been listening, I don't know how long, to your conversation, and at last has come to the conclusion that you are a foreigner. Is not that a compliment?"

"It is, indeed," replied Mrs. Sherbourne, casting down her eyes with very charming modesty; "but I have been too long accustomed to speak Italian to deserve any credit for it."

"You are an English woman, madam," said the old gentleman, looking at her with rather a remarkable expression,—“An English woman, and receive it as a compliment to be taken for any thing else? Very strange! Very strange, certainly! You are thankful for small favours, madam,” and so saying the old gentleman made her a stiff bow and walked off.

It sometimes happens that persons we consider as exceedingly contemptible in themselves, utter platitudes which produce very considerable effect. So it was with the old gentleman; Mrs. Sherbourne and Miss Theodosia, though despising him intensely in their hearts, talked no more Italian that night; nay, the younger lady was afterwards heard to mention this

rebuff as a reason for not talking it any more till the fashion became more general.

“It is so disagreeable,” said she, “to feel that one draws all eyes upon one ! Greatly as I prefer Italian to every other language, I really think for the present I shall abstain from speaking it. It will be lost.”

“Dear me ! Do you think so ?” replied her sister Almeria.

While this promising intimacy was cementing between the Gibson family and Mrs. Sherbourne, Clara wandered about, endeavouring to be very civil to every one, yet, in spite of herself, turning her eye to the door every time it opened, in the vain hope of seeing Dalrymple enter ; but though engaged by promise to attend her party, the recollections of the morning were not only powerful enough to make him break this promise, but also to make another to himself, whereby he pledged himself, under pain of self-contempt which was to have no end, never again to permit a weak admiration for beauty, grace, and intelligence, to beguile him into fancying that qualities of more sterling value

were joined with them. Happily, however, for poor Clara, she guessed not the cause of his absence, and at length satisfied her unspoiled spirit by remembering that he would certainly call on the morrow to account for his absence. It was exactly the time that she had made up her mind thus to console herself, that she remarked the solitary position of Charles, who, seemingly apart from all the rest, looked greatly like a person fallen from the moon amidst a world of which he knew nothing, and in which nobody knew him.

“Poor fellow!” she muttered, “what cruelty it seems to have beguiled him from his rustic rhymes, and the dear themes which inspired them up to the heartless puppet-show of London!” and thoughtless or indifferent as to the appearance of such marked attention, she made her way with considerable difficulty to a chair beside him, and placed herself in it, entered most good-humouredly into conversation with him, pointing out by name the persons most distinguished, and asking his opinion of the different young ladies present, as being she

thought the readiest mode of making him speak in return.

The first impression which Charles Chesterfield had made upon Miss Meddows, on the day he dined at the Grange, was that of a person suffering so painfully from shyness as to render the wild scheme of bringing him to London an act of perfect cruelty. Certain suspicions, too, as to her father's motives for this scheme, had made him an object of interest and compassion to her, which, joined to the capricious manner in which he was treated, wavering as it did from familiar kindness to imperious insolence, led her to consider it as a needful act of duty on her part to atone to him, as well as she could, for the discomforts of his situation. She resolutely determined to watch over his much-endangered interest, and thus render the consequences of the folly which his parents had committed in sending him on this wild-goose expedition as little injurious to him as possible. Beautiful women are often accused, and not always unjustly, of keeping the memory of their beauty ever with them; nevertheless, it does

sometimes happen that they sin from forgetting it. The idea that while endeavouring to atone to Charles for the evils her father had brought upon him, she might chance to turn his head, never for an instant entered hers ; and considering that she knew the youth to be a poet, this was very thoughtless. She made another blunder too . Instead of bestowing all this flattering kindness upon a timid boy, whose very soul, as she fancied, was blushing within him, it fell upon a young and very excitable imagination, at a moment when it and its owner were perfectly intoxicated with ambition, drunk with gratified vanity, and reeling under an accumulation of happiness almost greater than he could bear.

Charles did not reply to Clara's questions, as to whether he thought the young lady in pink prettier than the young lady in white, or the young lady in white prettier than the young lady in pink, by telling her that she was herself a hundred thousand times handsomer than either ; but he thought so, nevertheless : and he thought also, that there was something most

uncommonly kind and flattering in her coming thus and talking to him, in preference to all the fine people who filled the rooms. Charles, however, was no coxcomb. This kindness touched his heart, more than it did his vanity; and if the gratitude he felt was a great deal warmer than she intended to inspire, it was joined with a degree of respect which almost amounted to reverence.

This brightest of evenings wore very rapidly away in his estimation, though to poor Clara it seemed almost preternaturally long. Both, however, perceived that it was drawing to its close, for the rooms were thinning rapidly; till at last the persons who formed Sir George's whist-table and the Gibson family alone remained.

Before this time, however, a good deal of business had been done. Mr. Gibson had had the honour of losing three pounds ten to Mrs. Longuéville; Mrs. Gibson had obtained Mrs. Sherbourne's promise for a variety of gratifying little literary privileges, which only such authors as Mrs. Sherbourne can bestow, and only such ladies as Mrs. Gibson properly esteem.

Miss Theodosia Gibson, after a few doubts and fears on the subject, had ended by determining to trust to her own conscious powers of display and evasion, and ventured to elect herself to the place of Mrs. Sherbourne's most intimate friend, notwithstanding her alarming love for the Italian language ; and Miss Almeria was ready to declare that she had passed one of the most delightful evenings of her life, for Sir George had continually leant back in his chair to show her his hand, and paid her so many other pleasing but undefinable little attentions, that she dreamed three times before she got up the next morning, of hearing herself called ' my lady,' and of having a son and heir who was to be a baronet.

CHAPTER III.

A Lion at Home—Modern Literature—Its Divisions—
and Principles—Charles determines to commence his
Education anew.

CHARLES was in no sleeping mood when he returned to his lodgings, and having invested himself in a comfortable dressing-gown, the joint production of his mother and poor little Bessy, he opened his writing-desk, determined to sketch at least the plan of the promised prologue before he went to bed. Being a good deal more familiar with the Greek drama than with that of our own degenerate days, his first notion was that the fittest form for the composition he had undertaken was that of an opening speech ; and

he had already written about half-a-dozen lines of very classical structure, when he fortunately recollected having seen sundry prologues and epilogues by Garrick, and it struck him as probable that something of the same kind would be more conformable to the fashion of the present day.

Under this impression, he composed one of those platitudes which are, for the most part, the result of a predetermination to be bright, pointed, neat, and elegant, when a fluttering heart and unpractised hand undertakes the task. It would be doing him injustice to say he was quite satisfied with what he had done,—but at least he was very sleepy, and with the love of his pillow before his eyes, as much or, at that moment, perhaps more, than the love of fame, he rubbed his eyes, muttered “That must do,” and crept to bed.

It had been agreed on the preceding evening, that as soon as his composition was finished, he should wait upon Mrs. Sherbourne with it: and having waked at an hour considerably later than usual, he hurried over a solitary breakfast at his lodgings, wrote out the lines fairly, and set

off. But ere he had taken a dozen steps, it occurred to him that notwithstanding his fortunate recollection of Garrick, it was highly probable he might still have produced something not in exact accordance with the theatrical fashion of the present day. Were this the case, he should commit a twofold mischief in bringing it forward; for in the first place it might injure himself, and in the second Mrs. Sherbourne. The remedy for this embarrassing doubt was, however, obvious. His newly-formed alliance with Mr. Marchmont was of a kind that fully justified his applying to him for his judgment, and accordingly he immediately directed his steps towards Long-street.

His name had already been given to the little female Cerberus, who opened the street-door, as one of the elect permitted to mount to the region of undying fame, as those favourably reviewed in *The Regenerator* were wont to style the second-floor inhabited by its editor. Charles therefore climbed the stairs unchecked, and rejoiced as he did so at the increase of conse-

quence and confidence which he felt swelling at his heart.

His knock was answered by a rather surly "Come in!" the reason for which might be that Mr. Marchmont was still at breakfast, and moreover not breakfasting alone. The editor himself was seated in the same very easy but very dirty arm-chair in which he had seen him before; but his dress was different, for he now wore a dim-coloured cotton dressing-gown, a flannel waistcoat, no cravat, and the rest of his garments betokening greater attention to his own ease, than observance to his companion. This companion was a young, and rather pretty woman, who at the moment of Chesterfield's entrance was on her knees before the fire in the act of toasting a slice of bacon on a fork.

"What the devil makes you come so early, sir?" said Mr. Marchmont, in a tone that did not express any very peculiar satisfaction at seeing him.

"I beg your pardon a thousand times, sir," said Charles, in great confusion; "but I knew

not that your breakfast-hour was so late. Give me leave to go, and I will return again at any hour you will name."

"You may stay where you are now, Mr. Chesterfield. It is no great consequence your catching me in this way, if you really mean to stick to the oar. I can't always promise, you know, to be full dressed, or point device in any way when you run in and out upon business. But of course you know that between gentlemen it is a point of honour, where a lady is concerned, never to mention having seen her. You understand this sort of thing, of course?"

On this point, however, Mr. Marchmont never was more mistaken in his life. Charles did not understand "this sort of thing" the least in the world, but implicit obedience did quite as well as "the point of honour," and he replied very earnestly that of course he should never do any thing which Mr. Marchmont desired him not to do.

"Very well; that is all that's necessary. I desire you not to say that you have seen a petti-

coat breakfasting with me ;—and now your business ? Have you finished your story already ? If you have, you make quick work of it, young sir.”

“ Not quite, sir,” replied Charles. “ There is something else that I wish to ask your opinion upon—and it is this which occasions my visit.”

“ That won’t do, sir ; upon my soul I can have nothing to do with you on these terms. When I settle with one of my regular contributors that one sort of thing is to be sent in, it is totally out of the question that I should receive another.”

“ Of course, sir, of course, I did not mean that. I should never, on any account, think of taking such a liberty. But I was asked to do something last night, and I hope you won’t disapprove my consenting, but will have the goodness to give me your opinion of what I have written.”

Charles then proceeded to relate his having had the honour of being introduced to Mrs.

Sherbourne at Sir George Meddows's house, and all the flattering circumstances which had followed.

"I am persuaded that fellow fancies I want to marry his daughter," said Mr. Marchmont, knitting his brows with an expression of considerable displeasure; "my good friend Mr. Gibson has never yet got me an invitation to their parties—and there must be some reason for it. As to Mrs. Sherbourne, she will of course have to knuckle to me, like the rest of them, if she expects to do any thing. What is she to give you for this prologue?"

"Give me?" repeated Charles, laughing. "Oh! nothing. It never came into my head for a moment that I was to be paid for it. I shall be quite contented if she will let me go to a rehearsal."

"There you are wrong, sir, very wrong, indeed. Depend upon it, no one ever succeeded in obtaining a literary reputation by *giving* his compositions;—not to mention the great injury you do to others. I positively can continue no literary connexion with you whatever, unless

you pledge your word to me never to be guilty of this folly again—every thing you write must have a price put upon it.”

Terrified beyond measure at the idea of having thus hazarded all his dearest hopes by a piece of such very idle civility, Charles apologized with quite sufficient humility for his blunder, and gave the promise demanded without scruple or reservation. Having done so, however, he ventured to add,

“For the future, sir, I will give you no such cause of complaint; but of course I cannot revoke the promise I made last night; will you, therefore, have the kindness to tell me whether you think these lines will answer the purpose?”

Mr. Marchmont took the offered paper from the trembling hand of Charles; but before he opened it, he silently held out his teacup, which was about half full, to the sickly young woman, who had not ceased from the time Charles entered the room, to pursue with very strenuous attention a variety of operations, all having one and the same object—namely, the breakfast of Mr. Marchmont. She had toasted bacon, she

had boiled an egg, she had put water in the teapot, and coals upon the fire; but though there was a second teacup on the rusty little black tray, and a second plate on the dirty tablecloth, she had given no indication of intending to use either.

The silent demand of Mr. Marchmont's teacup was complied with as quietly as it was made, the young woman taking a black bottle from its bookish retreat, and filling the cup to its brim with the contents of it.

"There, there, that will do. Don't you hear that tiresome brat of yours squalling? Go and quiet it, for mercy's sake. I shall go perfectly distracted if I am to sit here listening to that infernal noise," said the master of the apartment, in a tone likely enough to make the pale girl he addressed remember that he was so.

She wasted no time in reply, but hastily replacing the bottle, hurried out of the room without speaking a word.

"Now then, young man, let us see what you have been about," and having swallowed the contents of his teacup, Mr. Marchmont rolled

his dingy wrapper round him, curled himself up in his arm-chair, and caused the very marrow in poor Charles's bones to quiver under the sternly-critical look which his features assumed.

The composition was not a long one, nor did it take long to read, though the trembling author seemed to die a thousand deaths in the interval.

If the eye of Marchmont appeared to pass over his lines rapidly, a sickly faintness seized upon his heart, from the conviction that they were already condemned. If he paused as he read, a cold shivering crept through his veins, from feeling assured that the bright spirit of his illustrious critic was already weary of him. At any rate, however, his suspense did not last longer than the time employed in the reading; for having reached the last line, Mr. Marchmont, laying the paper upon the table, and placing his arm upon it, said, "It won't do at all, sir. It is quite out of the question, I assure you, if you mean, as you say, to redeem your promise, you must alter these lines alto-

gether. And now, Mr. Chesterfield, I think it may be as well, once for all, to give you a few leading hints upon the present state of literature among us. Are you willing to give me your attention?"

Chesterfield replied, and most truly, that every word he should utter would be treasured in his memory, and valued as the greatest favour that could be bestowed on him.

"Well, then, sir, I am willing to take the trouble of speaking to you," replied Marchmont, with dignity. "To me, sir, it appears perfectly evident that you have received that most disqualifying of all gifts, a learned education. I lament it. I lament it for your sake, I lament it for my own. It is a heavy business, Mr. Chesterfield, to have to unlearn. Acquirements, comparatively speaking, are easily made, but far different is the mental operation of cleansing the mind from rubbish. To pluck from the memory a rooted folly is the very devil, sir, in the way of labour; yet this you must do, or give up the notion of authorship for ever."

“Tell me one thing, Mr. Marchmont, only tell me one thing,” said Charles, greatly agitated, “do you believe me capable of getting rid of the destructive errors you mention?”

“Why, yes, my dear sir, if there be sufficient intensity in your nature, I think this recovery may be hoped for. I have seen it performed on others, and why, therefore, should I not hope for it from you? Fortunately, Mr. Chesterfield, though there is very much to forget, there is but little to remember. Nothing can exceed the beautiful simplicity of the system by which all the greatest celebrities of the day are acquired. Instead of the infinitely complex varieties of style by which the literature of the world has been hitherto disgraced, all now resolves itself into two great elements, the transcendental and the burlesque. There is something vastly magnificent in the broad, unbroken line of this division. The genius of man rolls on unchecked, as heretofore, by the paralyzing considerations of the style demanded by such or such a theme; or, viler still, by submitting to the slavery of remembering how some former celebrity, dead

and rotten for ages and ages past, has treated it. Merciful sweet Heaven ! What can it signify to us how those that are gone may have thought, felt, reasoned, or decided ? Do we write for them ? Are the depths sublime of human passion, or of human crime, to be explained now as they were explained by our feeble ancestors of old ? The intensity, the intellectual intensity of only a hundred years ago, was, to the intellectual intensity of to-day, as the poor housewife's wheel, to the steam-engine ; and as well, my dear sir, may you hope to succeed by forming your compositions on such models as our drivelling forefathers have left us, as of making a fortune by setting up a distaff in opposition to a spinning-jenny ! The simile is a glorious one, and I must work it out hereafter. Do you understand me, Mr. Chesterfield ?”

“ This magnificent view of the progress of the human understanding is so new to me, Mr. Marchmont,” replied Charles, colouring, “ that I fear it will take some time before I can fully comprehend it. But let me entreat you to be patient with me. So ardent is my desire to

adopt your enlarged views, and master the mystery of your splendid theory, that I cannot but hope I shall succeed at last."

"No doubt of it, young man. The thing is by no means so difficult as it may at first appear. The two grand divisions I have mentioned comprehend the whole intellectual world; there is nothing which may not be classed either in the one or the other: and woe betide the weakling who should attempt to achieve literary renown by what can belong to neither."

"May I ask you, sir, as a sort of practical lesson," said Charles, modestly, "to show me a specimen of what you conceive to be excellent in each?"

"The request is a rational one, and shall be complied with," replied the mighty master, "though at the cost of very profitable time. If the lesson profits you, Chesterfield, you shall repay me for it hereafter." This was uttered with a very friendly nod, and an accent of such kind familiarity, that the sinking courage of Charles revived within him, and once more feeling his foot firmly planted on the ladder of

fame, he listened with ever-increasing interest to the words of his friend.

“To be *practically* useful, as you well express it, Chesterfield, I must, I fear, steal from my labouring hours sufficient time to give you short specimens of each, both in prose and verse. The lines you have yourself brought me this morning may, I am happy to say, with a little, a very little alteration, serve extremely well as a pretty fair specimen of the one genus, and a sonnet which I composed yesterday for the forthcoming number of *The Regenerator*, may do for the other.”

“Is it possible?” exclaimed Charles, in a perfect ecstasy of joy. “Is it possible that *any* alteration can render what you have just read available?”

“Most assuredly. I will make the alteration myself, and then read the lines aloud to you. I could not devise a better lesson. Have the kindness to mix a little brandy-and-water for me while I make the alteration, will you? You know where to find the needful, and there is

more hot water than you will want in the tea-kettle."

Charles readily undertook to perform the office again assigned him, and as he did so, marked with astonishment the rapid pen of the master going from line to line with a touch which seemed to resemble that of the enchanter's wand, till almost before he had given the final stir to the mixture he was preparing, Mr. Marchmont had completed his task, and casting his eye over the stanzas, exclaimed, "Very good—very good indeed. Nothing can go better than these lines now do. It is quite wonderful to see what may be done by rigidly adhering to a first principle. You shall hear my lines first, Chesterfield, and then I will read yours. I'll tell you what, my dear fellow," added the critic, tasting the beverage he had just received from the hands of Charles, "if you improve in verse-making as rapidly as in grog-brewing, you will speedily become the first poet of the age. It is capital, I can tell you. Now then for my sonnet. Observe the nature of the subject, Chesterfield,

and the structure of the verse, and whenever you take a theme of the same order, endeavour to follow it. One more sip, my dear brewer, and now for it.

SONNET

ON THE NOTHINGNESS OF ALL THINGS.

How vainly dotards urge the poor pretence,
 That the oft-mooted, "Is there aught? or nought?"
 May be resolved by evidence of sense!
 Poor shallow souls! whose puny minds are caught
 By empty sophistries of sight and touch!
 Such false realities, such lying truth,
 With all their show of somethingness, are such
 As cozen none who've passed their greenest youth.
 Almighty nothing! sublimated thought,
 Gazing at thee with upturn'd eagle eye,
 Forms the sole test whereby the wise are taught
 To recognise thy vast vacuity.
 For think of thought! Aye, strip our thinkings bare;
 Lo! mighty nothing, nought but thou art there.

Having pronounced these lines, Mr. Marchmont remained silent, looking earnestly in the face of Charles as if to discover what he thought of them. But this was not easy, for though Charles Chesterfield, generally speaking, had one of the most ingenuous countenances in the world, his features had now a sort of suspended

expression, as far as possible from being satisfactory ; for he looked not only as if he did not understand a single syllable of what he had heard, but as if he were waiting in expectation of the explanation which was to follow it. The truth of the case was that poor Charles found himself utterly at a loss to decide for which of the two divisions of all modern literature, the lines he had just heard were intended.

He remembered his own composition, and though he was far from thinking it could merit being designated as transcendental, he had still greater difficulty in believing that it could be classed as a burlesque ; so that after a few minutes of very harassing conjecture, he came to the conclusion, that Mr. Marchmont's lines were intended to be jocose. Having thus at length made up his mind upon the point, he endeavoured to smile, and look gay ; but he did not succeed well, for, somehow or other, though repeating again and again to himself that they must be comic, his assurance was not of that reasonable kind which is calculated to make a timid man easy, and after two or three

ineffectual attempts to declare that he enjoyed the fun exceedingly, he thought better of it, and only said that he should like very much to hear them all over again, they were so very original.

“Quite right, sir,” replied Mr. Marchmont, appearing perfectly satisfied with the phrase, “original is precisely what I intended they should be. It is a fair specimen of that pretty mode of catching and playing with an idea, which is perhaps the last, best gift of high philosophy.”

“Good,” thought Charles. “I knew I must be right. *Playing with an idea*. Oh! it is certainly exceedingly droll—very comic indeed,” he murmured inaudibly, but with great inward satisfaction.

“One of these days, however, you will have a copy of them in print, and then you will be able to study them as I think they deserve. I have no time to repeat them again now, for I am anxious, my good fellow, that you should pay attention to the manner in which I have contrived to bring your lines within reach of being classed under one of the great categories into which, as

I have told you, all modern literature is at present divided. You remember your lines, Mr. Chesterfield ?”

“Oh yes, sir, perfectly well,” replied the blushing poet.

“Now then, mark, as I read them to you.

PROLOGUE

INTENDED TO BE SPOKEN IN CHARACTER AT THE
FIRST REPRESENTATION OF MRS. SHERBOURNE’S
PLAY, BY A SERVANT OUT OF PLACE.

’Igh are our ’opes for our fair bard to-night !
Ve need no vitty vords your grace to vin ;
The critic’s wenomed lash must needs fall light,
When vomen to avake their lyres begin !

Vhy did the gods vill the immortal nine
To vear a wirgin form, a wirgin face ?
Vhy to each various muse of werse diwine
Assign a voman’s name, a voman’s gra’ce.

For this it vas—lest all the ’eavenly throng,
In jealous wengeance of such power supreme,
Should vage fell var against the gods of song,
And poison ’Elicon’s delicious stream.

But men and gods alike grant voman’s sway,
Nor blush to hown they are by ’er houtdone ;
Thus manly critics vill happlaud hour play,
And freely yield the palm by voman von.”

Having finished the perusal of these lines, which he delivered with a great deal of pointed humour, giving to each *v* and *w* an emphasis which wonderfully increased their value and effect, Mr. Marchmont gave way to a hearty burst of laughter.

“It is irresistible ! Perfectly irresistible, upon my soul ! I had no idea it would go so well. Are you not yourself astonished at the effect of it, Chesterfield ?”

Charles heaved a very deep-drawn sigh, but again endeavoured to smile a little the moment after, in order to place himself in better accordance with his “mighty master ;” but it would not do. The iron had entered into his very soul ! The lines by which he had hoped to propitiate the friendship of Mrs. Sherbourne were, it was plain, so irresistibly absurd, that not even the grave and high-toned philosophy of Mr. Marchmont could withstand their ludicrous effect ! *Why* he had read them in the peculiar manner he had done, was to him a mystery past finding out, for never having been in London before, and not having as yet enjoyed any op-

portunity of listening to the colloquial peculiarities of the lower orders, Charles was totally unaware of the clever, but simple *tour de force*, by which his lines had been converted into the very perfection of risible comedy. But the more he felt how utterly ignorant he was of all the potent mysteries of the noble art to which he had devoted himself, the more he felt the absolute necessity of yielding his mind without a struggle into the hands of the powerful instructor he had so providentially met with ; whose influence in the world of letters was as great as his genius, and whose kindness to him seemed, if possible, to exceed both. He remembered the manner in which the young men of Greece were wont to hang on the eloquent lips of the sages who instructed them.

“They challenged not,” thought Charles, “the wisdom of the lore they sought to acquire, neither will I. And where is the wonder that one bred, as I have been, in a retirement so profound as to shut out the knowledge of all that was passing amidst living men, should have acquired only such learning as may have been be-

queathed to us from the dead? It is evident that I must choose, and choose at once, between two things. I must either lay down the old-world learning of which we have made our boast amidst the secluded shades of Charlton, and give myself, heart and soul, to the strangely dazzling literature of the day, or at once abandon all hope of name and fame, and return to bury myself anew in the farm-house at Maplebury. My choice is made! I give myself heart and soul to the age in which I live."

"Mr. Marchmont!" said Charles, addressing his elected tutor, who, during the short interval of the young man's rumination had amused himself by running his eye anew over the lines he had so admirably turned from dull to droll,—
"Mr. Marchmont! Nothing but my very earnest wish for the information which you, of all men, are most able to give, could inspire me with courage to confess that I do not comprehend the classification of which you have been speaking, nor—forgive me—the style and manner in which you have been reading the stupid lines I gave you."

“Stupid ! Be satisfied, Chesterfield, when I tell you that they are admirable,” replied Mr. Marchmont, gravely.

“You are very kind, sir,” said Charles, with desperate courage, “but if they are, it is in a way that I do not understand. I did not mean to make them so very droll as you seem to think them.”

“Exactly so. I know it perfectly ; and herein consists the strength of that vast modern engine by which almost any imaginable composition may be made fit for profitable use. It will probably be some time before you will fully comprehend the principles I am endeavouring to teach you ; but fortunately for both of us, Chesterfield, the practice may be adopted, even before the principles are caught. For instance. Your prologue, in the state you gave it to me, could have produced no possible effect, except setting the good people to sleep before their time, which would not have been fair, you know, to Mrs. Sherbourne. But if distinctly delivered as I have left it, having merely transposed every *v* and *w* throughout the

four stanzas, and managed the aspirates according to the laws of modern wit, the effect, as you will see, will be electrical. Nobody can stand it. The young, the old, the grave, the gay, all yield together to the mysterious *spell* (forgive the pun) produced by this mode of writing. Yet it is a very simple operation. But it may perhaps be necessary for you repeatedly to note the fact, before you can be able to conceive it. That it is so, however, is as certain as that the round globe we call the sun produces light and heat. So, on the other hand, there be many thoughts which Goodman Dull, the parish-parson, perhaps might pronounce to be mere midsummer madness, concocted when the moon was at the full. And yet, Chesterfield, these noble rhapsodies in which the mind is now permitted to wander unrestrained through the mystic ether of imagination, are productive of a genus of compositions as sublime as they are new. Milton knew nothing about it, absolutely nothing. His great poem, as it used to be called, if just read straight on, as ordinary prose, would sound little better than Jack the Giant-killer, to

persons accustomed to the intensity of sentiment and passion brought forward in the transcendental compositions of our own time. When once you become familiarly acquainted with these, and with the best specimens of our great burlesque school, you may consider your education, as an author, complete. I have already ascertained that you have some command of words—and this, excepting pen, ink, and paper, is the only *materiel* essentially necessary to ensure success. Thought lends itself so easily to the present style of writing, that all difficulty on that score is completely removed. And now I think I have said enough for the present. I will give you some specimens to study, before we meet again, which cannot fail of being useful to you. Here they are,” he added, opening his desk and taking from it two small packets, containing a sheet or two each. “They are both so highly finished, and so excellent in their way, that I keep them back purposely a little, to bring up the tone of any number less brilliantly excellent than I might wish.”

"May I ask the names of their authors, sir?" said Charles, hesitating.

"They are both from my own pen," replied Mr. Marchmont.

"You are a wonderful man, sir!" exclaimed the youthful tyro, in burst of irrepressible admiration. "Equally great in all ways!"

"I don't know about that, my dear fellow," answered the master, modestly. "But in point of fact, Chesterfield, it is most indisputably certain, that without considerable versatility of talent, no man could hold the situation of editor of *The Regenerator*"

"That is indeed, sir, a truth too obvious to to be controverted. But alas! Mr. Marchmont, I tremble before the conscious deficiency of my own powers, even as a contributor—at least for some time to come. Shall I confess to you, that even now I do not well understand the reason of your altering the spelling of my lines. Why does every body enjoy it so much?"

"Is it possible that you do not yourself taste the exquisite burlesque?" demanded Marchmont, looking at him with genuine astonishment.

“I perceive that the words so pronounced sound very strangely, but they might be made to sound more strangely still, if more letters were changed,” observed Charles.

“Egad, that’s very true, boy, and I don’t know but we might make some use of it—but it must be in a totally different manner. This, you see, is genuine London lingo. The manner, you know, in which the very lowest of the people talk in the streets.”

“Is it indeed !” said Charles.

“To be sure it is. Didn’t you know that ?” returned Mr. Marchmont, in a tone of considerable contempt.

“I had no idea of it, sir. You know I have never been in London before, and as yet I have walked very little in the streets. It seems to me, then,” added the young man, musingly, “that this species of composition is intended wholly for London ?”

“Nonsense ! That’s utter nonsense, Chesterfield. The whole world must learn the cockney tongue, if they do not know it already. I tell you once for all, that cockney slang, and cock-

ney pronunciation is the very essence, the very marrow, the very life and soul of English wit at the present day: and if you don't understand it, you must learn to understand it; and if you don't like it, you must learn to like it; and if you refuse to make use of it, you may just shut up shop and run away."

"I will learn it, I will like it, and I will make use of it," exclaimed Charles, eagerly; "and if I agree to this, Mr. Marchmont," he continued, with some little show of country spirit, "you must not be angry with me if I say, that for the life of me I can't help thinking there is more wit in the Rape of the Lock, now, for instance, than in all the queer spelling in the world."

"A more musty-fusty bit of criticism than that has not been uttered, Chesterfield, I will bet my existence, since the bishops' wigs were thrown into the fire. It smells of Russia leather and vellum, like a college-library; and were I to *début* such a notion in *The Regenerator*, I'll engage to say that my subscribers would fall off three-fourths before the next number."

"Fear nothing from me, my dear sir," returned

Charles, earnestly; "I would rather put my hand into the fire than risk any injury to your publication by my countrified notions. I feel already so deeply conscious of the lamentable ignorance in which I have been reared, that, depend upon it, I shall, from very shame, be driven to adopt views more enlightened, and fitter for the age in which we live. But just at first, the light seems to dawn so suddenly upon me, that I wink like a person newly led from a dark prison."

"Capital! You should not squander such an excellent thought as that in idle talk, Chesterfield. It is enough to beget a whole paper on enlarged views, and anti-musty principles. Now off with you, my fine fellow, I must positively write seven columns and a half before I dine. Let me have your story as soon as it's done; and hark-ye, Chesterfield, when you have read the two articles you have got there, if you should happen to find that your own seems to go flat after them, remember what I have been saying—remember, that if you cannot make it do one way, you may change it to another."

“ You may depend upon it, Mr. Marchmont, that I shall never, as long as I remember any thing, forget your instructions of this morning. It will be some time, perhaps, before what is so new can become familiar, but however little I may understand your principles of composition, my confidence in their value never can be shaken.”

“ You are a very fine young man, Mr. Chesterfield : you tell me you have confidence in me, and I may very sincerely return the compliment. I have confidence in you ; and feel no doubt whatever, that in the course of a year or two, if you persevere steadily in writing for *The Regenerator*, your literary reputation will be spread as far and wide as my own.”

Charles seized the hand of his new friend, and pressed it to his heart, but he had no power to speak. The prophecy he had heard rung in his ears, and rendered him for a minute or two quite incapable of utterance.

“ If I do become known,” he said at last, “ if in sober earnest I may indeed hope to become one of the great and glorious republic of letters,

it will be to you that I shall owe it, and my gratitude shall end but with my life!"

The emotions of the poor youth as he uttered this were equally strong and genuine; Mr. Marchmont returned the pressure of his hand, and seemed to feel a great deal too, and so they parted, neither of them speaking again, but naturally giving a farewell wring to the hand they held, and exchanging a look which said much more about affection and confidence than any words could have done.

"Poor old Westbrook!" murmured Charles, as he turned his steps homeward, "he did for me the best he could! But this man is at once my tutor and my example, my patron and my friend!"

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Sherbourne—Charles's visit to her—He Progresses rapidly.

It has seldom happened that any mind, not absolutely passing from a sane to an insane state, ever underwent a more violent and complete change than that of Charles Chesterfield, in the interval between his arrival in London, and his entering Mrs. Sherbourne's parlour in Mount-street. The primal cause of this lamentable want of steadfast principle and steadfast taste, was the restless, gnawing, insatiable vanity which had disturbed him, even when reading his verses to Bessy on the turf-bank in Maplebury orchard.

Her ardent admiration of every thing he did, delighted, but could not satisfy him; nay, on the contrary, it only nourished the flame that consumed him.

“If this dear girl, unenlightened as she is, feels thus vividly the beauty of these thoughts, and the charm of their expression, what might I not hope for, had I the means of making them known to the world!”

Such was the thought that first fixed his waking faculties in the morning and weighed the last upon his heart, when sleep came to change the bootless hopes and idle wishes of the day, into the feverish dreams, and glorious visions of the night.

This inordinate passion — this strong, yet sickly vanity, had almost stifled all the best affections of his nature, while he remained in the country; and when he arrived in town, that longed-for goal of his fantastic hopes, the seemingly near approach of all that he most coveted on earth nearly made him an idiot. Such was the unmeasured dignity which he attached to London celebrity, that the looking upon March-

mont, after being assured that he possessed it, was like gazing upon the incarnation of the highest glory to which man could attain on earth. No wonder then, that in such a state of mind he was contented to crawl submissively in his train, intoxicated, entranced, and bewildered, by the belief that by doing so, he too might become

“A thing to wonder at—perhaps a—”

filling up the hiatus with one name or another, as the manner of the multitude dictated, or the advertising judgment of the newspapers ordained.

The most injurious step, perhaps, in the whole process which thus confounded the poor lad's intellect, was that by which he gained the point from whence he ceased to contemplate his former tutor with reverence. From that time his judgment became so utterly lost and bewildered, as to leave him precisely in the condition of a very frail little vessel, without any rudder at all.

But to return. From the house of Mr.

Marchmont, Charles immediately returned to his lodgings, carefully copied his prologue with its emendations, and then proceeded to that of Mrs. Sherbourne, whom he found precisely as he could have wished ; that is to say, alone, and with all her thoughts concentrated on the subject on which he came to speak.

Those who are familiar, personally, with the authorial world of London, must know, or have known, more than one person in many points exceedingly like Mrs. Sherbourne. She was, beyond all doubt, past her first youth, but she was in the fullest meridian of her second. A period, it may be observed, infinitely more thought of and cared for by the fair possessor, than the first, which in most cases is pretty much permitted to take care of itself, without any very active attempts to improve upon nature. Not so with the period which we venture to denominate the second ; and it may be, that the consciousness felt by beauties in their second stage of bloom, of their charms being in a great degree the result of their own ingenious industry, may be one reason for the

increased value they set upon them. At any rate, Mrs. Sherbourne did very dearly value all the beauty she had left, and certainly watched over it with quite as much care as any mother could do over her child. It has been before stated that she was 'exceedingly small; but if at any moment of her existence she might have felt a pang at passing almost unseen, when some noble Juno, or firm-stepping Diana, with their graceful length of limb, drew all eyes upon them, she felt it amply atoned for, when she contemplated her own tiny foot, and fairy hand. Her hair too, which was somewhat of the auburn tint, curled naturally; her complexion, though rather sallow, was sufficiently colourless to give her hands, arms, neck, and shoulders, the reputation of being very fair, and their renown on this account ran no danger 'of being lost or forgotten, by their retirement from public observation. Her eyes were very large, and though extremely light, understood well the mysterious tactics of the exercise to which they were drilled, often speaking unutterable things with most eloquent expression. Her

nose, notwithstanding the sublimity of her genius, was a little approaching to the pug ; her mouth was wide, her teeth beautiful, and she enjoyed the advantage of an ever ready and pretty dimple. Such was the person of Mrs. Sherbourne. To describe her mind as accurately would be more difficult. She certainly was not without talent—far from it ; but it was of a flimsy, loose, and unstable quality. No one was more ready to pronounce an opinion, yet there was probably no subject under Heaven, except her own beauty, and that of all the young men of her acquaintance, on which she really had one.

This, as she talked a vast deal (except when engaged in one of those sentimental flirtations which are carried on entirely by means of by-play and a silence so remarkable as to attract every body's attention)—as, excepting on these occasions, she was a great talker, the total want of fixed opinions, all must have involved her in many self-contradictions, had not her infinite skill in subterfuge and prevarication prevented it.

So habitual to her was the necessity of thus dipping, as it were, under the deep waters of her own uncertainty, in order to avoid being caught in the fact of exactly contradicting herself, that she never spoke with peculiar warmth and eloquence, without preparing a retreat from every word she uttered. Sometimes she broke down all matter-of-fact remarks, by an outbreak of playful childishness, in which her teeth and her dimple did her infinite service. Sometimes she melted away into generalities; and sometimes condensed herself into a well-told little anecdote, perfectly foreign to the subject. If the theme were earthly, positive, and inconveniently bearing upon facts, she darted gracefully aloft like a skylark, and twittered away in the region of metaphysics. Was it criticism, and did she chance to blunder grossly, from the accident of never having read a line of the work under discussion, she saved herself by setting off upon a sort of catch-me-who-can gallop, over verse and across prose; through history, and under common sense, till she had completely distanced the slow-paced march of truth and reason, and

then turned ready to back upon **her** pursuers, perfectly unwearied, wholly unscathed, and quite ready to set off again.

For the success of her works, on which she almost entirely depended for her existence, she trusted to what she called the intensity of her own feelings. Nor did she trust in vain. No circulating library from the Orkneys to the Land's End, dared to confess that they had not got Mrs. Sherbourne's last work: and 'The Condemned One'—'The Entranced One'—'The Corrupted One'—'The Infernal One'—'The Empyrean One'—and 'The Disgusting One,' and all in succession conveyed her intensity into every village of the empire, and brought in return wherewithal to 'live and love, to dress and dream' (which in one of her 'Occasional Poems' she had declared ought to be the whole of woman's existence), very much to her satisfaction. Whether she or her publisher got tired first, it is not necessary to inquire; but having, as she often said with her deepest dimple, thrown off many, she was determined not to throw off *one* more, lest she

should throw it away; and of late she had devoted herself wholly to poetry, having already published 'Songs of Love and Lays of Laziness,'—'Songs of Sound and Songs of Sense,' besides a little volume on 'Withering Leaves and Opening Buds.' She was now, as we have seen, concentrating all her strength upon a drama, which a very particular friend of hers had undertaken to get acted, through the interest of a manager with whom he was exceedingly intimate.

The morning-dress of Mrs. Sherbourne never varied, at least as to its style. Summer and winter she was always *décolletée*, and summer and winter she was always enveloped, more or less, in a black cashmere shawl. She was usually placed on a sofa with a small table and writing-desk before her, and a very inviting arm-chair immediately opposite; nevertheless, Mrs. Sherbourne's morning visitors sometimes sat beside her on the sofa, and sometimes the examination of a new-born poem was permitted to be carried on over her shoulder, and sometimes by her side. But this, of course, was

only among her particular friends; those less familiar being always established in the arm-chair.

That Mrs. Sherbourne, who had been seven years a widow, had made no second marriage, must, in all civility, be received as proof that she preferred a single life; and that she was very much the fashion among a certain set, and received without scruple by ladies of the highest respectability, must be held as equally conclusive of the perfect discretion of her conduct, notwithstanding her constant and avowed habit of receiving visits from all sorts of gentlemen, at almost all sorts of hours. But, as she was wont to observe, her professional existence depended upon her welcoming without reserve all those who could assist her in her pursuits, either by criticism or patronage—a truth too obvious to be controverted by any one. Her existence, therefore, glided on through a series of small literary labours, cheered by a series, equally unbroken, of small literary flirtations, each helping forward the other by a reciprocity of influence, by no means unskilfully managed.

Whenever she particularly dreaded a writer of biting paragraphs, she managed to get introduced to him, and rarely failed, however fierce his nature, to calm the terrors of his pen, as far as herself was concerned, by that gentle tone of independent weakness, which, as long as a white hand remains to flourish a pocket-handkerchief, and expressive eyes to drop their liquid pearls upon it, can hardly fail to soften the most flinty heart. While, on the other hand, whenever she wished to produce an effect, and display herself as the centre of a circle, she understood perfectly well how to make common cause between her books and her beauty, without ever permitting the one to outshine the other.

The moment Charles entered the room, she remembered that Mrs. Gibson announced him as one of the most promising young authors of the day; she remembered also that he had undertaken to write her a prologue gratis; moreover she did not forget that she thought him very handsome, so that altogether he could not fail of being satisfied with his reception, or of feeling a delightful assurance that he was

advancing rapidly towards fame, and all the pleasures, as well as all the glories that it brings.

“I have waited upon you, Mrs. Sherbourne,” he said, “in order to submit to your inspection the lines I have scribbled for your prologue. I would not, however, take the liberty of offering them to your notice till I had sought the judgment of Mr. Marchmont upon them. I need hardly ask you if you know his name?”

“O Heavens! no! *The Regenerator!*” replied Mrs. Sherbourne. “The man of all others to whom I am most anxious to be presented! My wanderings amidst the

“Fier, frondi, erbe, ombre, antri, onde, âure.”

of *la bella poese*, have kept me hitherto from making any personal acquaintance with him, but of his reputation and his influence who can be ignorant? How can I thank you, dear, dear Mr. Chesterfield? How can I be sufficiently grateful for your excessive kindness? So soon to have completed your benevolent task, and with such admirable tact to have submitted it

at once to *The Regenerator*, deserves more gratitude than I have words to express, but not more than I have power to feel!" And here, Mrs. Sherbourne, quite overwhelmed by her feelings, sought her pocket-handkerchief with a hasty action, intending to conceal her emotion; but it concealed nothing; the hurried movement, on the contrary, disturbed the position of her shawl, and displayed a white shoulder, with a long brown ringlet falling down, as if on purpose to touch it. She really looked as attractive as it was possible she could look.

"How very pretty she is!" thought Charles; and the opinion could do no discredit to his taste, inasmuch as it was precisely the same as almost all gentlemen formed on witnessing the same action, the same result.

After a moment given to the touching her eyes, and replacing her shawl (that most troublesome of all draperies), Mrs. Sherbourne resumed, "Let me then see what you have done. You have no idea how I long for it!"

Charles drew out the paper, but ere he put it in her hands, he asked whether her absence

from England had been sufficiently long to prevent her becoming acquainted with the recent division of modern literature into two classes.

The lady looked a little puzzled.

“What classes, Mr. Chesterfield?—I do not quite comprehend you,” she said.

“I mean the transcendental and the ludicrous,” he replied, while his heart fluttered pleasantly in his bosom at finding himself soon becoming an instructor, and the instructor, too, of so very charming a person. “All compositions, as my admirable friend Mr. Marchmont tells me, are now ranged under one or other of these two heads, and no success can be hoped for from productions which belong to neither. Are you not aware of this, my dear madam?”

“Oh, dear yes! perfectly. I did not exactly catch your meaning at first; but tell your gifted friend from me, I beseech you, that I honour the boldness of his definition, and hold myself bound to submit to the rule,” replied Mrs. Sherbourne, giving her troublesome shawl another ineffectual pull, for it positively would not

come above the left shoulder. "Alas for me!" she continued, "nature has classed me already, and that too rigorously, I believe, even to permit my wavering. It is not my style, Mr. Chesterfield—not my style only, that places me, of necessity, I may say, amidst transcendental writers. With intensity of feeling such as mine, I am doomed, for ever doomed, to be such or nothing!"

"And would you wish it otherwise, dearest lady?" cried Charles, with enthusiasm. "Among such only can we hope to find the highest order of greatness. I protest to you," he continued, while a sort of mystical rapture expanded his countenance, "I protest to you, Mrs. Sherbourne, that there is something in Mr. Marchmont's manner of expressing himself, as well as in his manner of thinking, when taking flight into this higher region of intellectual existence, which affects me in a manner that I cannot describe."

"Ah!" exclaimed the lady, clasping her hand, and gazing at him with what she would herself have called "fevered interest." "I

catch your feeling! You are entranced and borne along.—You are roused, elevated, touched, and overwhelmed! Yet happy, exquisitely happy amidst the fine mental tumult! Is it not so, Mr. Chesterfield? Tell me!” and she laid her little hand upon his arm, “tell me! Do I not harp your feelings rightly?”

“Oh! yes, I believe,” returned Charles, colouring a little. “But I really hardly know what I felt. All that seems perfectly clear and intelligible to me is, that Mr. Marchmont is one of the most extraordinary men that ever lived!”

“Every hour is lost in which I do not know him!” cried Mrs. Sherbourne. “Oh! tell him! will you tell him, Mr. Chesterfield, what my feelings are towards him? Do this skilfully, and you will serve both yourself and me,” she added, with more of truth and less of flourish than she had yet spoken. “For of course you may give him to understand that the intensity of the impulse which draws me towards him, is in a great degree derived from your description of his extraordinary powers. You are younger

than I am !” and her large pale eyes seemed almost to melt under the gentle sadness with which she owned this *not* soft impeachment, “younger in the world of letters, younger in all ways, and I do you service, and in some degree return the kindness you have shown me, by impressing upon you the immense importance of propitiating the favour of Mr. Marchmont.”

“So Mrs. Gibson told me,” replied Charles, looking as if he thought both ladies meant rather more than he perfectly comprehended. “Of course you mean that to so young an author as myself, his instructions and advice are invaluable ?”

“Oh ! of course,” replied Mrs. Sherbourne, but in an accent which convinced her companion that she meant something else besides.

“It will be very kind, my dear Mrs. Sherbourne, if you will explain yourself fully,” said Charles, fixing his anxious eyes so earnestly on hers, that she dropped them from the mere force of habit. “I beg your pardon,” he added, with some little embarrassment, “if I have asked you to say more than you like.”

“No, no, do not think it!” returned Mrs. Sherbourne, once more laying her hand kindly on his arm, and quite persuaded that a part at least of the young man’s earnestness of manner in making this appeal, arose from a natural wish to be on more confidential acquaintance. “Our interests are so much the same, dear Mr. Chesterfield, to render reserve necessary—indeed to me such restraint would be most unnatural, when conversing with such a one as yourself. I do not, I cannot fear either treachery or indiscretion from you, and, therefore, I will speak with perfect frankness. Admirable as you say Mr. Marchmont’s talents are—and I am sure I have no doubt in the world of it, which is a fact that I exceedingly desire that he should know, Mr. Chesterfield—remember that, will you? Admirable as he is, that is not the only reason why you and I should be desirous of standing well with him. *The Regenerator* has a very extensive sale, and its influence upon circulating libraries is prodigious. Are you not aware of this?”

Charles again felt puzzled, yet he was getting

on very rapidly, and was already grown too wise to look as bewildered as he felt.

"I dare say it is," he replied.

"Enormous!" resumed Mrs. Sherbourne. "I am assured that in the great manufacturing towns, where there is a most important mass of middle-class and lower-class readers, *The Regenerator* can make the difference between copy or two."

"Really!" said Charles.

"It is no exaggeration, I assure you; and just conceive what that must be! People talk of the *great* reviews, as they call them, as if they were of the utmost importance to the writing world. There are, I believe, particularly in London, a set of people who hardly read any thing else; that is quite true: but trust me, my dear sir, their influence upon the writers of the day—the popular writers I mean—not the great heavy guns that are fired off about once in a dozen years—but upon what may properly be called *popular* writers,—upon these their influence, compared to that of such a publication as *The*

Regenerator, is absolutely nothing. And this fact should never be lost sight of by authors."

"I understand perfectly," said Charles. "You mean that *The Regenerator* is so much more read than those great reviews, as you call them, that their praise or blame of a new book cannot be spread so widely?"

"Not among circulating libraries, certainly. But that is not all, you know; very far from it. The great secret lies in knowing how *The Regenerator*, and all the papers of the same stamp, are carried on—particularly in the critical department. You write for it, Mrs. Gibson tells me, and therefore," added Mrs. Sherbourne, laughing, and playfully holding up her finger within an inch of his nose, "I need not explain the mystery of the ready made part of the concern."

Charles said nothing in reply, and certainly looked more meditative than lively. "Foolish boy! How easily he might have kissed my hand!" thought Mrs. Sherbourne; and at the same time a feeling of caution seized upon her, and she determined upon not being too confidential.



Charles's life a tale with Mr. Thornton



Changing her tone, therefore, she said, "But how idly am I gossiping instead of seizing upon the precious aid you bring me. Now, then, let me see my prologue, dear Mr. Chesterfield!"

"I greatly doubt," he replied, colouring painfully to the very tips of his ears, "I greatly doubt, my dear Mrs. Sherbourne, whether you will approve what I have brought you. In speaking of Mr. Marchmont, we have alluded only to his sublime compositions; are you aware that he himself occasionally indulges in the burlesque, and that he thinks very highly of the effect to be obtained on the public mind by the present ludicrous mode of composition?"

"Of course I am aware of it,—who is not? This is an age of epochs, Mr. Chesterfield, and the introduction of this new school of wit forms one of them. Is your prologue written upon this tone?"

"It is," replied Charles, rather solemnly.

"I am delighted to hear it! Nothing is so likely to put the audience in good humour! How very judicious and how very kind!" said Mrs. Sherbourne, with very genuine delight.

Thus encouraged, Charles, with a tolerably steady hand, presented the manuscript to her.

“Will you not read it to me?” said she.

“I would rather you looked at it first yourself,” he replied.

Without further delay, Mrs. Sherbourne opened the paper and read, “‘*By a servant out of place.*’ Excellent! A most happy idea indeed!” She then proceeded with a rapid eye to peruse the verses, and, to poor Charles’s inexpressible relief, appeared enchanted with them, bursting again and again into delighted laughter, and ended by clapping her hands, and crying “bravo!” with the most clamorous applause.

“How extraordinarily clever!” she said, more gravely reperusing the lines. “If you had known me as many years as you have done hours, Mr. Chesterfield, you could not have hit upon any thing so certain of being advantageous to me. Such lines as these would undoubtedly have produced great effect under any circumstances, but preceding a drama of mine, it will be perfectly overpowering. The

intensity with which I write is so well known to the public, that this delicious incongruity will be felt as keenly, and enjoyed as heartily before they have heard or read a line of the play, as if every touching scene was already before them. You shall be with me, dear Chesterfield, at the first representation, and witnessing the success of your lines will be your best reward for having written them."

As she said this she placed her hand in his, with a grace so irresistibly bewitching that this time he actually did kiss it, being, in truth, so intoxicated by his unexpected success, as to have courage for any thing. In proof of which he said, as he still held her hand, "But you won't forget the rehearsal, Mrs. Sherbourne? I perfectly long for it!"

"Forget it? No, you delightful creature! I shall certainly not forget either that or any thing else I can do to please you. Yes, dear Chesterfield! we will go together to the next rehearsal, and if you like my little drama, you will not refuse, will you—

'Freely to grant the praise by *voman von.*' "

Charles made a more suitable answer to this speech than it would have been possible for him to have done twenty-four hours before. To such a temperament as his, there is no inspiration in the world like a little flattery.

“I will write to you then—shall I?” said the lady, “when the day for the next rehearsal is fixed. And we will go together, dear friend.”

“A thousand, thousand thanks!” replied the happy Charles.

“But your address, *étourdi*! How am I to write to you without that?” said Mrs. Sherbourne, fixing her eyes upon his, and shaking her head respectfully.

Charles reseated himself, her little hand playfully placed a pen in his large one, and he wrote his name and the address to his lodgings in South Molton-street, giving it to her with a look almost as lingering as her own.

“*Bene, bene*, I shall now know where to find you. Farewell! But do not run away now and forget me!”

Certainly no young man could improve more rapidly than Charles Chesterfield, and nothing

could be less alike than his manner of accosting Mrs. Sherbourne on arriving, and that of his taking leave of her, when he departed. The improvement was not lost upon her.

“What an excessively nice creature!” she murmured, as he drew the house-door after him. “I must find time to see him often. It will be a real pleasure to be of use to him, and I know I could improve him amazingly. He is precisely the kind of being that I love to patronize and be kind to!”

CHAPTER V.

Charles visits Miss Meddows—Cross Purposes—Letters to Country Friends—An unpublished M.S.—A Visit from the “Master.”

THE first movement of Charles on leaving Mrs. Sherbourne was to return to Long-street, and express to Marchmont all the gratitude he felt for the great service he had rendered him, but ere he had descended one-third of the way from Mount-street to the region of Golden-square, he recollected what his patron had said respecting the pressure of business which was upon him, and turning back he determined to seek Miss Meddows, and tell her of the happiness he had that morning enjoyed, from having

more than satisfied the celebrated Mrs. Sherbourne by the prologue he had taken to her. It was long past the hour of luncheon, and if he saw Miss Meddows at all, it could only be by asking admission to the little boudoir behind the drawing-rooms, into which she had once shown him the way herself. Nothing could prove more strongly the change which the last ten days had produced on the mind of Charles, than his having conceived such a project; but instead of trembling at the idea, he now enjoyed it extremely, feeling certain of a kind reception, remembering how Clara had left every body to talk to him on the night of her party, and conscious that the news he had to communicate must place him still higher in her good opinion. In short, he determined to make his way to her without ceremony.

Notwithstanding his separate lodging, the young man was sufficiently domesticated in the house to permit of his coming in and going out without any questions asked or answered; and he now, therefore, walked into the hall, and up the drawing-room stairs, without even

inquiring if Miss Meddows were at home. The passage which led to her retreat was approached by a door that opened about half-way up the principal staircase, and had in every way the appearance of leading to a more retired and out-of-the-way part of the mansion than guests are usually admitted to in a London residence. Of this, however, Charles knew nothing, and certainly had no idea that there was any greater impertinence in seeking the young lady there than in the drawing-room. He had, however, sufficient discrimination to knock at the door of the room before he opened it, but his signal being answered by a gentle-sounding "come in," he immediately made his appearance, where he was certainly as little expected as possible.

Had Clara possessed less clearness of perception, the young intruder would have been received with considerable more haughtiness than under the circumstances she thought proper to display. His exclamation of, "Oh, Miss Meddows, I have such good news to tell you!" with the eager, happy look that accompanied it, explained to her at once the state of

his mind, and altogether disarmed her displeasure at the unauthorized freedom of his approach.

“Have you, Mr. Chesterfield?” she said with a friendly smile, “and what may it be?”

“I have written a prologue for Mrs. Sherbourne’s play, and she thinks it very good and very clever indeed, and says it will do perfectly. And it will certainly be spoken, Miss Meddows, when her play is acted. Will you not be so kind as to go and hear it?”

It was in Clara’s nature not to answer such an address with either pride or peevishness, and there was something in the heavy sadness of her own heart which made her feel that happiness ought to be cherished wherever it was seen.

“Indeed, I am very glad of it,” she replied, “and if I do not witness its public success, I assure you I shall hear of it with great pleasure.”

But having said this, and seeing him place his hand upon the back of a chair, very much as if his next manœuvre would be to place

himself in it, she looked a little grave, and remained for a moment with her hand spread upon the book she was reading, meditating on the gentlest manner of telling the young poet that he must be pleased to understand that he was not to pay her any more such unexpected visits for the future. Before this meditative minute was over, she was startled by hearing her father's voice in the passage leading to her door, and still more startled when he opened it, and ushered in Mr. Dalrymple.

As such an occurrence had never happened to her before, it might naturally have produced an emotion, even had she not spent many hours of the morning in vain efforts to ascertain the meaning of the words she read, while heavily reckoning the hours as they passed without bringing the hoped-for announcement that Mr. Dalrymple was in the drawing-room.

His sudden appearance, and in a manner, too, in which he had never appeared before—for this was the first time he had ever entered her room—completely overset the composure of manner which it was the great study of her life

to sustain in her intercourse with him. Her delicate cheeks and even her forehead became crimson; she rose up and sat down again without being conscious that she did either; and in short betrayed every symptom of the most violent and embarrassing confusion. Of the presence of Charles she became perfectly unconscious, and even totally forgot for the moment that he had entered the room. Not so Mr. Dalrymple; he could scarcely be said indeed to see any thing else; or to be conscious of any thing but that the young man had been enjoying the privilege of a *tête-à-tête* in a part of the mansion so secure from ordinary interruption, that he now, for the first time, was made acquainted of its existence. In another moment, however, he was conscious of something else too; he was conscious that the cold and haughty Clara was overwhelmed with confusion.

Mr. Dalrymple assuredly was not the first man who has read amiss the heart he was most anxious to study; but never certainly did any

of his predecessors in blundering, blunder more egregiously.

There stood the high-minded, the delicate, the reserved Clara, startled out of her self-possession by the unexpected sight of him—of him whom of all the world she most esteemed, revered, admired, and—alas! despite of all her proud struggles—loved; devotedly, passionately, fondly loved; there stood Clara trembling, blushing, faltering from the emotion produced by his presence, forgetful that there was another human being in the room, or in the world—forgetful even of her fair self. And there stood Dalrymple, distilling wretchedness from what, if read aright, would have made him fancy that earth was turned to Heaven; there he stood, turning himself to stone by his own hard thoughts, and secretly taking all the gods to witness that never, never would he see that vain, light woman more.

Sir George meanwhile looked about him sharply enough, but all he could make out from what he saw was that Dalrymple looked devilish

cross, and Clara confoundedly red. As to Charles, he presumed he was there to perform some behest of his "heiress," as he not unfrequently called her, particularly before strangers, and having given him a smart slap on the shoulder, accompanied by his usual salutation, "How are ye, my fine fellow?" he thought no more about him.

Having in some degree recovered from the surprise which had caused her to betray a weakness in general so effectually concealed, Clara said,

"Will you not sit down, Mr. Dalrymple? This is a very unusual honour, papa, and I am quite proud of it."

At the words "unusual honour," Mr. Dalrymple involuntarily raised his eyes from the ground to young Chesterfield, and had Clara happened to intercept the glance, she might have become enlightened upon more points than one, concerning which she was now in very profound darkness. Had her father encountered it, the metropolitan adventures of Charles Chesterfield would probably have been

brought to a very hasty conclusion ; for whatever might have been the whim that brought him there, or the calculations which led to his being retained, it is quite certain that had they been of a much more solid composition than they were, they would all have melted into thin air, had the idea suggested itself, that his presence was disagreeable to Mr. Dalrymple.

Clara, however, saw not this speaking look, because, though recovering herself, she was by no means courageous enough as yet to raise her eyes to the face of Mr. Dalrymple ; and Sir George saw it not, because he happened to be looking at the name of "Almeria Gibson," inscribed upon a note which lay open upon the table before him.

"What has that nice girl been writing to you about, Clara?" demanded Sir George, pointing to the despatch.

"She wants me to walk with her in the park this morning," replied the young lady, rather glad of an opportunity of speaking.

"May I read her note, Clara?" said Sir George, laughing.

Happy also to have something to do, Clara made a step or two towards the place where it lay, and taking it up, presented it to him. In doing this she passed close to Dalrymple, and involuntarily, perhaps, looked up into his face as she retreated again. It would be difficult to define the feeling which the expression of his countenance produced on her; it was terror, astonishment, and tenderness, all in one. He was deadly pale, and his eye spoke anger, disdain, and a degree of misery that almost approached to despair. Her only idea was that he must be suddenly ill.

“You are not well, Mr. Dalrymple?” she exclaimed. “Sit down, I pray you sit down; I am sure you are not well.”

“I beg your pardon, Miss Meddows, I am perfectly well, I assure you,” he replied. “Rather harassed, perhaps,” he continued, “by the hurry in which I am preparing to leave town; but, nevertheless, I have found time to make my *cong  * to you, though I fear it has been done at the expense of your convenience. Had I known that you were engaged, I would

not have permitted your father to lead me hither. I trust you will forgive this very impertinent intrusion, of which I really feel heartily ashamed."

"I am not at all engaged, Mr. Dalrymple," said Clara, turning her eyes towards her desk, to see what it might be that had put the idea of her being so very busy into his head, "I was merely reading and I did not find my book at all entertaining. I do assure you that your visit has not interrupted me at all."

"Reading, were you?" he replied, drily.

"Yes," she said, turning over the leaves of the volume, and totally forgetful of the presence of Charles; "I have been reading with great diligence, for I wanted to send the book home. Are you going to be many days absent from London, Mr. Dalrymple?"

Indignant and irritated beyond measure, at a reply that appeared to him as offensive from its mocking falsehood, as hypocritical in its civility, he stood for a moment without returning any answer, and then said,

"Many days? Oh, yes, probably for many.

weeks. Have the kindness to present my compliments to Mrs. Longuéville. And now I must wish you good morning, for I really have a thousand things to do. Good morning, Sir George."

"Where the devil are you going to?" said the baronet, alluding however only to his leaving the room, which he was at that moment evidently about to do, for of his suddenly announced project of leaving town he had heard not a word, having been wholly engrossed by the despatch of the fair Almeria. "What makes you in such a confounded hurry, Arthur? I wanted you to go with me to the club."

"I have a great deal of business to do this morning, Sir George, and though, of course, I should be delighted to make a longer visit, it is impossible. Have you any commands for Herefordshire? I am going out of town this afternoon."

"Have I any commands for Herefordshire?" reiterated Sir George. "What on earth do you mean, my dear Arthur? You are not going to waste any of your precious hours amidst the

rooks and the ravens of Springfield, exactly when London is beginning to be alive? The idea is perfectly monstrous and impossible. I won't believe it. It is positively too absurd."

"Is it?" replied the young man, endeavouring to force a smile. "I have a fancy for seeing my own roses blow, but if I find the doing so too dreadful to bear I shall come back again."

"Take my word for it, my dear fellow, you will post down for no other purpose in the world but to post up again. Do not be so fanciful and foolish. It is not like you, Arthur," said Sir George, with more gravity than he often said any thing, and probably with much more sincerity of feeling.

"I grieve to differ from you," was the light reply, "but go I absolutely must. Good morning, Miss Meddows. Good-bye, Sir George. I shall see you when I come to town again; though when that may happen to be, I cannot exactly say."

Clara, who was now as pale as Dalrymple had been a few minutes before, answered not

a word. She bowed mechanically, a salute which he returned with much ceremony, and the next moment he was gone. Sir George followed him, and then Clara dropped into a chair with a fulness of misery, and a perfection of hopelessness, such as she had never felt before.

She now became aware of the presence of young Chesterfield, from the extreme annoyance it caused her, and with a movement of fretful wretchedness, which she had never before given way to, she said, "Pray leave me, Mr. Chesterfield, I am not at leisure now to talk to you."

Charles, notwithstanding all his recent glory, was still much too humble to feel himself offended by this unceremonious dismissal, and in an accent rather penitent than angry said, "I am sorry, then, that I interrupted you !" after which he retreated with a noiseless step, and gently shutting the door made his way back to the hall, let himself out without disturbing any other part of the household, and returned to his lodgings without the slightest consciousness of having received a rebuff. But if he did

not feel that she had been rude and unkind, poor Clara herself did, and shed contrite tears for the degrading weakness which could make her imperious to the unoffending and humble Charles, because the proud and unobservant Dalrymple had given this new proof of his indifference.

Dalrymple kept his word ; he did leave town ; he did see his own roses blow ; and only returned to London at the end of June, about a week after he had completed his twenty-ninth year, for the purpose of settling accounts with his guardian, and arranging his affairs preparatory to an expedition to Russia, which he intended should occupy him for a couple of years.

The affairs of Charles meanwhile went on and prospered marvellously. The success of his prologue gave him all the courage he wanted, and when he again sat down to his writing-desk, it was with the determination of completing the story he had began for *The Regenerator*, before he read the two models intrusted to him by the "mighty master," "If

I succeed without imitation," thought he, "Mr. Marchmont will naturally prefer it, as it will give greater variety to his pages; and if not, I shall have time enough before the next number to show what I can do, either in the sublime or the comic style, with his finished models before me. I am quite sure that I am capable of both."

With this comfortable conviction he proceeded rapidly, and though he twice took the trouble of transcribing his manuscript, for the sake of improving, and re-improving the composition, he had finished it by the time Mr. Marchmont told him it would be required. "Bring it me on Wednesday morning," had been the command of Mr. Marchmont. The last manuscript was completed on Tuesday morning before he sat down to his solitary cup of tea and penny roll; for since he had been really at work he had constantly breakfasted at his lodgings.

He was pleased with what he had done, and in truth felt perfectly happy. Mrs. Gibson's party for the evening made his heart flutter with

anticipated triumph ; he knew that Mrs. Sherbourne was to be there, and, remembering all the touching softness of her manner to him in private, doubted not of her so far distinguishing him in public as to make him the most envied man in the room.

“ It is quite odd,” thought he, “ how much she has put the beauty of Miss Meddows out of my head ;” and as he thought of this he stirred his tea perseveringly for several minutes, without at all knowing what he was about. “ Yet Clara is far lovelier,” he went on, “ and she likes me very much, too, but there is something—something so much more—I don’t know what—something so much more overcoming to one’s heart in Mrs. Sherbourne. Oh, Bessy ! Bessy ! how could I ever fancy that you were the most beautiful girl in the world ! She is no more compared to Miss Meddows than a daisy to a camilla—and in the way of bewitchingness, Mrs. Sherbourne beats her out and out. The fact is, nobody knows what’s what till they come to London.”

At this point of his ruminations Charles

swallowed the remainder of his first cup of tea, and prepared to pour out a second, but discovered that he had neglected to replenish the tea-pot.

“I know what little Bessy was good for at any rate,” he continued, looking disconsolately into his empty teapot, “and that was, to give one a comfortable breakfast, without having the plague of thinking about it. Dear little soul! how neat and bright she used to look, trotting in from the dairy, with her little mug of beautiful cream in one hand, and a plate of new-churned butter in the other! Let me see who I will, and fall in love with who I will, I shall never quite forget her!”

This acknowledgment seemed to touch the inconstant's own heart a little, for it is a positive fact, though there was nobody present, save himself, to bear witness to it, that a tear actually rose in his eye, lingered there for a moment, and then trickled down his cheek.

“This is what they call being home-sick, I suppose.” he exclaimed, starting up and dashing away the tell-tale of his still unconquered

feelings. "It will wear off in time, I dare say, and so much the better, for, faith and troth, it makes me feel like a baby. If I gave way to the whim, I think I could cry for an hour only because I happened to remember some of that little girl's pretty ways. However, I don't want to forget her altogether, neither. No, nor any of them, not even the kind-hearted Mr. Westbrook, though he is such a twaddle, as Mr. Marchmont calls it, and what's more, I will write to them both before I read a word of the two tales. I am half afraid to look at those tales for fear I should get out of conceit with my own. Yet it is cowardly to feel so, for I know in the very bottom of my heart that there is merit in what I have done, and a good deal too."

Half muttering, and half meditating these wayward fancies, Charles set aside his teaboard, replaced his little desk at its now familiar corner of the table, and wrote the following letters with great rapidity. Ere he began, however, he pondered a little upon the two initiatory phrases, "Honoured sir," and "Dear Mr. Westbrook."

A few weeks before he would most undoubtedly have chosen the former; but now, rather ashamed of his hesitation, and suddenly cutting it short, he wrote,

“Dear Mr. Westbrook,

“It was very kind of you to answer my first letter so quickly, and, you may depend upon it, I never shall forget your kindness in all ways. You tell me to communicate to you all particulars of my literary progress, and likewise my observations on the advancement that learning is making in the metropolis. Your first question may be easily and very pleasantly answered. I am getting on very greatly beyond my most sanguine hopes, for I am already engaged to write every month for a work called *The Regenerator*, which is considered, as I am informed by excellent authority, to be by far the most able and influential publication of the present day. The editor of this celebrated miscellany is Mr. Marchmont, a name so well known to the whole literary world, that our ignorance of it, my dear sir, is a sad proof of the intel-

lectual darkness in which we have been living at Charlton. I have also tried my pen, and I am happy to say with very flattering success, on a prologue which is to be spoken at the first representation of 'The Morning Star;' a drama in five acts, from the well-known pen of the celebrated Mrs. Sherbourne—one of the most gifted women of the present age. Nothing can exceed the kindness with which this admirable lady has accepted this little effort. Mr. Marchmont also considers it to be very good; and I would certainly send you a copy of it, were it not that I have, upon the best advice, been induced to adorn it with some of the peculiarities which distinguish one of the two great classes into which English literature is now divided, and I doubt if it would be quite intelligible to you at present. I am afraid that this explanation may appear in some degree obscure to you; but I am sorry to say, that just at present I cannot venture to become more explicit. The subject is not without its difficulties.

“In answer to your second question, my dear sir, respecting the opinion which I have

formed of the progress that learning is making in the metropolis, I can only reply, generally, that the human mind appears just now to be propelled forward with a vehement vigour which might almost terrify the looker on, were we not at the same time assured by the greatest philosophers of the modern world, that this extraordinary movement is as glorious in its results as unprecedented in its rapidity. That a flood of knowledge thus rushing forward as it were, like a majestic cataract, should level in its course all antique prejudices, and overthrow a prodigious number of existing opinions, can reasonably be matter of astonishment to no one. I will not deny that I have acquired ideas in the great emporium of mind, which at the first view startled me. But I have already learned to misdoubt my doubts, and with the humility becoming one so ignorant, have proclaimed myself ready to abandon all my former crude notions and worn-out opinions, as soon as I shall hear them contradicted by those who have nobly put themselves in the van of modern learning; or rather let me say, my dear

sir, of modern *intelligence*, for the confined sense in which it has been customary among us to use this word *learning*, has thrown something of contempt, not to say ridicule, upon it, which renders it disagreeably obnoxious to the disciples of the present world of letters. Surrounded by all the inducements to profound study and lofty speculation which this noble metropolis affords, my letters must of necessity be short; but believe me, I entreat you, my dear sir, now and always your very affectionate pupil,

“CHARLES CHESTERFIELD.”

Having finished this epistle, Charles read it over, and congratulated himself upon having very skilfully got over ground which he felt it was difficult to travel in company with his worthy, but totally unenlightened old friend. Yet despite this approval, he was rather conscious, on reaching the signature, that the composition was not so affectionate as it ought to be. “That I should continue to reverence as a sage, a man whose mind is so perfectly enve-

loped in darkness, is impossible," thought he; "but there can surely be no intellectual degradation in still loving the old man; and with this feeling he added, as a postscript, "I hope that, as the season advances, you will enjoy the sunshine in your pretty harbour, and that you will sometimes think of your old scholar when you are sitting there. Does dear old Tabby follow you as she used to do, and purr and rub herself against your legs with the same comfortable certainty of being welcome? I must not envy your cat; that would be *infra dig.* in a London author, but I should like to have a look at you and Tabby now and then, if it were possible. But I am afraid it is impossible to have all that we love and admire about us at the same time."

In writing to little Bessy there were difficulties also, and he sat for above a minute with his pen suspended over the paper before he decided how to begin this letter also. "She is still but a child," said he, "and it would be any thing but wise to treat her otherwise."

After this very judicious reflection, his embar

rassment vanished, and with all the conscious self-approval, which acting with discretion is sure to give, he wrote—

“ My dear little girl,

“ Though you certainly know no more about London than your favourite pigeon, you will be able to understand that when a man is fairly launched into the great world, it is very difficult for him to find time to write letters ; and you must always keep this in mind, my dear little friend, whenever a longer interval than usual elapses without your hearing from me. Though you certainly cannot understand much about London authorship, I think you may be able to guess a little, how different must be the life of a man who writes for *The Regenerator* (the most influential periodical in the world), from that which I used to lead at Maplebury. At this very moment, Bessy, two works of great importance, as yet unpublished, but confessed to be models by one most capable of judging them,—at this very moment these two works are lying on my desk unread ! Will not this lessen

your wonder, my dear child, if you find this letter a short one? I hope you are all quite well at Maplebury. Pray give my love to my father, mother, Kit, and Susan, by no means forgetting yourself; and believe me to be, my dear little girl, your very affectionate friend,

“CHARLES CHESTERFIELD.”

Charles read this letter too after he had finished it, and blushed a little as he did so. The figure of Bessy in the moonlit porch, and as she had sat beside him on the turf seat in the orchard on the night before he set off for London, rose vividly before him. Perhaps something like a comparison between Bessy on the bank, and Mrs. Sherbourne on the sofa, suggested itself; but if so, he drove it from him as an idle thought, exceedingly unprofitable, and altogether wrong; and without venturing upon any postscript at all, he hastily folded the letter and sealed it.

This duty performed, the young man settled himself anew at his desk, and laid his hand upon the precious pages he was about to peruse.

“Now then,” said he, “I will give my whole soul to the study of this great man’s style. Surely this is the proudest moment of my life ! An unpublished MS. of Marchmont’s before me ! I can hardly believe it ? Gracious Heaven ! What a new existence, and how strangely like what I used to dream of between sleeping and waking, when lying beside the dear little river in the copse ! The transcendental and the burlesque ! Here they are both, and each of them beyond all question the very perfection of its genus.

“Which shall I take first ? Let me see their titles. ‘Responsibility: a tale.’ That might be either grave or gay, according to the master’s will. And the other, ‘Desperation.’ Nay, that settles it. This must be tragedy, and here I will begin. I long at once to follow him in his highest flight.

DESPERATION :

A NARRATIVE FOUNDED ON FACT.

ON the 17th November, 1823, the streets of London were so densely crammed with yellow

fog, that by half-past three in the afternoon, it became wholly impossible to see across the narrowest of them. At this moment an individual might have been remarked walking rapidly down Monmouth-street, towards the Seven Dials. His appearance, if not prepossessing, was at least remarkable; and no one who had ever looked at him earnestly for five minutes, was at all likely to forget him again. His age might have been about thirty-seven or thirty-eight; his stature rather below the middle size, and with no marked propensity either to leanness or the reverse. His hair was brown, and cut short; his eyes rather of a light blue; his mouth not ill-formed, and garnished with a set of moderately white teeth; his nose was neither Greek nor Roman, but something between both; and his complexion, though by no means remarkable in any way, was rather fresh-coloured than otherwise; his coat was blue, and of the manufacture known by the name of second cloth; his waistcoat red and black, in stripes, with small black spots upon the red stripe, and small red spots upon the black; his cravat consisted of a cotton kerchief, of which the preponderating colour was yellow, though a wavy line of dingy purple might be traced at intervals

through the whole of it; his trousers were composed of what is technically termed mixed cloth; his stockings were invisible, but were in truth of black and white worsted, considerably the worse for wear; his shoes, for boots he had none, had the appearance of being greatly more brown than black—the blacking process having indeed been altogether neglected; his beaver was in tolerably good shape, but nevertheless had evidently seen better days; and his gloves were of coarse, strong-knitted worsted. Such was the being who now, as we have said, walked rapidly onwards through Monmouth-street, in the direction of the Seven Dials.

“Oh, it is cold,” he uttered, “very cold.”

Yet still he urged his steps onwards, onwards, onwards, nor stopped till he reached the yawning entrance to a cellar, the door of which stood open, notwithstanding the rigorous rudeness of the season.

Whatever might be his purpose, it was evident that concealment at this moment made no part of it; for he descended the broken and slippery steps without care or caution of any kind, and reached the bottom of them at last with that sort of unsteady abruptness, which indicates an almost total want of thought.

“Marry come up, Mr. Figgins!” exclaimed Mrs. Brawley, the lady who, carrying on in this profound retreat the subterraneous profession of oyster-seller to the most fashionable portion of the neighbourhood, retained the respect so justly her due by never permitting any thing to pass in her presence unchallenged and unreprieved. “Marry come up, Mr. Figgins!” said she, “I marvels at your imperdence, coming down upon one after that fashion.”

“No offence, Mrs. Brawley, by your leave,” replied the remarkable stranger, walking straight up to a fire that burned with inviting brightness in the most distant corner of the uncouth apartment.

“Hoffence hindeed! and I should be ’appy to know vot sitch as the likes of you calls hoffence?” screamed the shrew. “You’d think it no hoffence, maybe, to fire yourself out of a cannon into a lady’s room, and knock her brains out with your bullet of a ’ed.”

“I ax your pardon then, Mrs. Brawley,” replied the person she called Figgins; “I should count sitch a hact as the unperlitest thing in natur.”

“You vud, vud you, then vot for do you come thundering down my stairs that vay?

You ought to be ashamed of yourself, and that's the truth, and no lie."

The female who uttered this, was short, fat, and exceedingly red in the nose. Her dress was sordid in the extreme, being composed of black stuff, which seemed to have an extraneous surface of grease, that caused it to shine in the fire-light, as with arms a-kimbo she stood before the flaming grate. Cap she had none, but a large and very dirty blue handkerchief, spotted with white, covered her head, and crossing under her chin was tied behind, the ends hanging down upon her back. An apron which had once been white, but which could boast this hue of purity no longer, adorned the front of her person, while her bosom was sheltered by a ragged shawl, which hung over her fat shoulders in scollops.

Though there was nothing in this figure to propitiate kindness, or even civility, and though her manners, still more than her appearance, seemed an antidote to both; the demeanour of Figgins, if such indeed was his name, underwent no alteration, but continued uniformly gentle and obliging, in spite of all she could say to provoke him. Those indeed who had watched him narrowly might have perceived a quivering

of the lip, a nervous motion about the eye, an occasional start, and an anxious restless watchfulness in his manner of turning his head towards the stairs, that might have taught them to explain this gentleness, by proving that he was not at that moment in a state to quarrel with any one. It was evident that some heavy anxiety weighed upon him, though of what nature, it was by no means easy to define.

His manner seemed not, however, to excite either interest or suspicion in the mind of Mrs. Brawley, for having continued her maundering, till apparently weary of its non-effect, she suddenly broke off, and said, probably in as civil a tone as she was mistress of,

“Vell then, Mr. Figgins, I suppose you’ll be after aving some hoysters, von’t you?”

The individual she thus addressed, started as if he had seen a spectre. He laid his hand upon the woman’s arm, and looking almost wildly in her face, exclaimed,

“Gracious Heaven! Am I come to this? Must I bend the craven knee and sue for mercy here?”

Large drops of sweat stood upon his forehead, his lips were as pale as ashes, and though firmly built, and even athletic for his size, he

trembled from head to foot like an infant. It was impossible to look at him without emotion.

“Vat’s in the vind now!” cried Mrs. Brawley, fixing her great eyes upon him with something between terror and astonishment. “If there bean’t mischief brewing somewhere, I’ll never trust nobody’s looks no more. Out with it, man! If I had a mind to peach, I might do it now as safe as after you’d told all. What gallows job have you been after?”

“Woman!” returned the stranger, with an accent which made even her hard nature shudder. “Woman! I have committed murder! Murder, woman! Bloody, bloody murder!”

“The devil you have, you big blackguard?” she replied; “and that’s what makes you come sneaking here, is it!”

“No words! no trifling!” cried he whom she had distinguished by the name of Figgins.

“The grave yawns before me! The gallows lifts its everlasting arms to seize and throw me into it! Speak, say, decide at once! Will you save me? No shuffling, no doubt, yes or no?”

Oh nature! How wondrous are thy sympathies! This coarse, hard female, vicious, intemperate, corrupted, as she had become, was yet a woman still! For one short moment of

tremendous doubt, she remained gazing in the face of the wretched man whose fate hung upon her lips, and none might say from that hard countenance what might be the workings of the soul within.

But at length she exclaimed with the voice of a stentor, and in the attitude of a boxer, "Yes, by the living jingo ! and him vat comes to nab you, ere, old boy, shall have my ten commandments writ upon his cheeks, to say nothing of his eyes, and that vill be the very best he'll get."

The revulsion of feeling produced by this cordial burst, was more than the agitated man could bear, and ere her powerful arm could be extended to save him, he fell prostrate at her feet.

* * * *

As Charles Chesterfield read these last words there was a sharp knocking at the house-door, which caused him to start almost as violently as if he had been in the predicament of Mr. Figgins, for he was in truth completely absorbed in the task on which he was employed, his attention being fascinated not only by the extremely pleasing nature of the narrative itself,

but also by the earnest desire he felt to discover the object of the great master in its composition. What might it mean? Could this be intended for the sublime? Could it be comic? One or the other he had been told it was, and one or the other he was sure it must be—but which? To which of the two great classes did it belong? Notwithstanding the extremely deep interest of the story, these questions recurred perpetually like the note of the trumpet, heard at intervals above all the other instruments in that anthem of anthems, “The dead shall be raised,” and like that, bringing back the mind to the *general subject*.

This struggle, however, between his imagination and his critical judgment was not destined to endure, for before he had fully recovered the startling effects of the knocking, his own parlour-door opened, and Mr. Marchmont stood before him. He appeared considerably agitated, was heated and out of breath, evidently from the effects of having walked too rapidly; he addressed no word to his astonished host, but fixing his eager eyes upon the table

and the desk, darted instantly forward, and seizing upon the manuscript upon which Charles was occupied, sank upon a chair, tossed his hat upon the floor, drew forth a handkerchief wherewith he wiped his heated brows, and at length, exclaimed,

“Thank God, it’s safe ! I have got hold of it again, and that is better luck than I deserved.”

“What is safe, Mr. Marchmont ? What is it that has been in danger ? And wherefore are you so agitated ?” said Charles, standing opposite to his unexpected visiter, and staring at him with equal surprise and curiosity.

“Have you such a thing as a glass of brandy, Chesterfield ?” eagerly demanded Mr. Marchmont.

“No, indeed, sir, I have not,” replied the young man ; “but I dare say the girl of the house could get some for you. Shall I send out, sir ?”

“Yes, my dear fellow, do, for mercy’s sake : for I declare to you, upon my life and honour, that I am half dead.”

Charles immediately rang the bell, and gave

the necessary orders, and then, turning again to his patron, and perceiving that after carefully rolling up the manuscript, he was preparing to put it in his pocket, he ventured to say,

“Oh, pray sir, do not take it away with you, it is so very interesting.”

“Interesting?” replied Marchmont, adding, with a slight laugh, “I believe so, indeed. You want to learn it by rote, I suppose; but that won’t do. You have had time to read it over a dozen times, at least, and if you will believe me, I never found out what you had got till this morning—this hour, in fact this half hour. Faith, Chesterfield, you have got the devil’s luck and your own too, to get sight of what was intrusted to me in so very private a manner.”

Though puzzled and mystified beyond measure, Charles answered very ingenuously, “I have certainly had it long enough to read it through many times, Mr. Marchmont, and yet I give you my word that I have not done so. I have only taken it up within the last half hour; and, to tell you the truth, I am heartily glad you

are come, for I began to feel greatly at a loss as to the classification of it. This story then, called ‘Desperation,’ is not your own composition?”

“No, sir, it is not,” replied Mr. Marchmont, with an air of mystery, and with the air of one who intended not to say more than he could help.

“I am glad to hear it,” said Charles, “for I may now without scruple confess to you that I cannot conceive it to belong to the transcendental or the burlesque school. I now presume that it is a species of erratic composition that belongs to neither.”

“I beg your pardon, sir, I beg your pardon. It is in all respects the perfection of both, because it is in every sense of the phrase *sui generis*, and is composed in a spirit too enlarged to be easily defined, and too admirable to be fairly classed with any other. Nevertheless, a professional critic like myself, accustomed to analysis, and what may be called the habit of literary dissection, can hardly fail to perceive that the enormous power displayed in this new

school arises from its having availed itself of an immense mass of materials which have never been made use of before. Talk of Shakspeare? why, my dear sir, it is as evident as that two and two make four, that notwithstanding the wide range which that old gentleman's fancy certainly took, going, as we all know, very absurdly beyond the limits of existing nature, he nevertheless constantly shackled himself by the pedantic notion of poetical fitness. As if all things in earth and heaven, from the rising sun, robed in its eastern splendour, to the felon in Newgate, or the fish-wife at her stall, were not all equally worthy of being converted to the purposes of a man of genius? Why in Apollo's name should Cleopatra be held a worthier theme than Billingsgate Moll or Clerkenwell Bess? It is nonsense to cant about morality, you know; for not only this dark-browed queen, but lots of other ladies, to whom nobody objects as heroines, have terribly bad reputations. No, no, that was not it. Poetical exclusiveness rested on far different grounds, and whatever you may think of it, young man, the

reform bill had as much to do in throwing open these long neglected treasures of human interest, as in throwing open our boroughs. All hail ! to both, say I. Nor have we done yet, Chesterfield. Universal suffrage has yet to come in both ways ; and when we obtain the vote by ballot, we shall obtain at the same time, perhaps, such outpourings from the profoundest depths of the social scale, as shall make old tight-laced tragedy look pale for shame of her own weakness. But I am opening my heart to you as if you were indeed a well-tried friend and ally, and such in truth I hope to find you. It was only chance, however, I will tell you that frankly, which put these pages in your hand. As yet they belong to their author, and not to me, for we have not yet come to terms. He demands an enormous price for them, and yet he is but just beginning his new career. He confesses himself to be but an imitator of the great masters, but there is a boldness in the sketch that shows of what he is capable. Do you not think it admirable ?”

“ I hope, sir, you will let me read it to the

end," said Charles, "I can hardly judge of it by what I have yet read."

"Impossible, Chesterfield! I am thankful that I arrived in time to prevent your going on with it. The catastrophe is completely new, and of a kind to eclipse every thing that has been done yet. Tyburn!—paugh!—Tyburn is nothing to it! It would be the greatest possible injustice to the author, as well as to ourselves, if we became the purchasers, to let it be noised abroad. This work will make a new stepping-stone, you may depend upon it, to lead us down towards the most terrific depths of sin, a dozen fathom lower I trust than we have ever been before! The power is stupendous, I assure you. The Great Western engine is a teakettle compared to it. With such a press as ours, Mr. Chesterfield, and with such institutions as we may soon hope to possess, I see not but that we may fairly expect to have every species of restraint removed which now cripples the native energies of man. Talk of the light of the mind! In that respect we may be said at this moment to be in a state of general conflagration—blazing

in all directions ; and truly we may declare that nothing shall be hid from the light thereof. Where is there ignorance now, Chesterfield ? There is not a school-boy of ten years old—nor for that matter a school-girl either, who may not in our days know more about every species of sin and suffering, high-minded desperate daring, and that noble courage which fears neither god nor devil, than all their grandfathers put together. It is a fine spectacle, a very fine spectacle, Chesterfield !”

During this speech the maid of the house entered with a glass of brandy, and it was a great proof of the earnestness with which Mr. Marchmont spoke, that he did not raise it to his lips till he had finished. Then he tossed it off, and rising at the same time said, “ Give me the other manuscript too, my good fellow, and I will take it home with me.”

“ But I have not read it yet, sir,” said Charles, in some confusion, and conscious that the delay must give him the appearance of great indifference.

“Indeed,” returned Mr. Marchmont, coldly ;
“then you cannot be very anxious about it.”

“Quite the contrary, quite the contrary, sir,”
returned Charles, with great earnestness, “I
delayed the reading till I had finished my own
story, only because I was afraid of being
tempted to imitate it more closely than you
might approve.”

“You could hardly have done any thing so
likely to improve your production. However,
being proprietor as well as editor, it is my inte-
rest to encourage originality in all ways. It is
the most valuable quality after all. You have
then finished your story?”

“I have, sir,” replied Chesterfield, endea-
vouring to speak with composure.

“Give it to me, then. I am glad to find you
are so punctual.”

Charles put the two manuscripts into his
hand together ; and affected to smile gaily as he
did it ; but in truth he was too much agitated
to speak.

“That’s right. Good morning. We shall
meet at the Gibsons’, of course.”

And so saying, the great man nodded his head, took up his hat, and departed, leaving Charles in a state of nervousness between hope and fear, that made him about equally long for and dread the hour of meeting; for he well knew there was abundance of time for Mr. Marchmont to read the whole of his composition before that hour arrived, and feeling quite sure that he would do so, he felt as if his fate altogether depended upon the next few hours.

CHAPTER VI.

The Toilet Intellectual—"A Charming Group"—Sir George Meddows suffers a *désenchantement*—An Illustration of Milton—Vanity's Punishment.

It was very rarely that Miss Meddows profited by the general invitation which she had received for all Mrs. Gibson's Tuesday evening parties ; but Sir George having declared that it was his purpose to go, and his wish that she should go likewise, she submitted, though feeling much more disposed to plead illness, and go to bed, than to become one of the admiring throng assembled to gaze on Mrs. Gibson's lions. Mrs. Longuéville, however, declared that another

evening at Mrs. Gibson's would decidedly be her death; so she sent for an old lady to play at piquet with her; and the baronet, with his daughter, entered Mrs. Gibson's drawing-room together with the *protégé*, to whom Sir George graciously said, about five minutes before they set off—"You may go with us, if you will, Charles, because Mrs. Longuéville stays at home."

The rooms were very nearly full, for the expected presence of Mrs. Sherbourne had been industriously circulated, and many came for the purpose of meeting a lady who had a forthcoming play announced at one of the great theatres. But if this lady was the centre of attraction to others, Mr. Marchmont was the centre of attraction to her; and it might be accounted fortunate for Mrs. Gibson that it was so; for had it been otherwise, had his enormous appetite for flattery, usually so highly pampered in that drawing-room, been starved by seeing all its expected dainties handed over to another, it might be difficult to guess to what extremities of rabbose rage the unwonted

disappointment might have driven him. But from this he was happily saved by the adulation of a single worshipper. No one knew better than Mrs. Sherbourne how to administer the sweet opiate; and no one could be more earnestly bent than she was, on the present occasion, upon exhibiting the delicious drug with effect.

Mr. Marchmont had dined with his dear friends, as the thoughtful Mrs. Gibson always took care he should do, whenever she had reason to believe that her evening party would be either too large or too fine to make a restorative little supper convenient. He well knew too who he was about to meet, as whenever any person remarkable in any way was expected, he always received notice of it; an attention as profitable to Mrs. Gibson as to himself, inasmuch as it enabled him always to assume a style and a tone suitable to the occasion. In the present instance he had not only Mrs. Sherbourne, but Miss Meddows to prepare for, and it was for many reasons his intention to be peculiarly effective. He had heard much of

Miss Meddows, her beauty, talents, foreign education, and heiressship ; and though he had heard much of Mrs. Sherbourne also, it was certainly his intention to bestow himself chiefly on the former and younger lady. Never perhaps had he bestowed more care on his appearance than he did that night. His hair which for some time past he had been nourishing into great length, was parted transversely from above his left eye, across his head, both divisions being carefully lodged behind his rather capacious ears, and permitted to hang down in a wavy line, not wholly the work of nature, to about midway the collar of his coat. The wristbands of his shirt-sleeves were turned back like a widow's weepers ; and the only confinement to which his shirt was submitted, consisted of a broad black ribbon, over which his shirt-collar was turned, hanging over that of his coat like a schoolboy's of the last century. This, Mr. Marchmont called the "Vandyck style," and often declared that he considered it to be the duty of every Englishman to adopt it, in the hope of rivalling the exquisitely picturesque

aspect of *La jeune France*, as seen in the theatres, and on the Boulevards. "They must not leave us behind them in every thing!" were the words he used, when advocating this remarkable style of dress. "It is mortification enough to remember, that where we have one popular political movement, they have a dozen." Urged by this patriotic spirit of emulation, as well as by the lofty ambition—

"That best infirmity of noble minds—"

which ever propelled him to be in the van of all innovation, Mr. Marchmont's appearance on the present occasion was much too striking to be overlooked by either of the two ladies, in whose eyes he most particularly wished to be distinguished—and he was distinguished by them, not only as a very remarkable looking individual indeed, but each, though neither had ever seen him before, felt certain at the first glance, that it was Mr. Marchmont who stood before her. "That extremely queer looking person must be the man I have so carefully avoided," thought Clara. "But it matters not! He whose dislike of him engendered mine, is

no longer within reach of being disgusted by his approach!—I need not avoid him for his sake now.”

“Marchmont! As sure as I live, that is Marchmont,” reasoned Mrs. Sherbourne. “How deliciously original he looks!—I must win him, if I never steal into the heart of mortal man again!”

Mrs. Gibson was in full glory. The remarkable loveliness of Miss Meddows, and that striking elegance of appearance which distinguishes every beautiful woman who has the good taste to let her dress be rather in accordance with the fashion of the day, than a servile specimen of it, drew all eyes upon her, and seemed of itself sufficient to render the scene brilliant. The lady, who at least for a week or two was likely to be more talked about than any other authoress in London, sat beside her on the same sofa, dividing the curiosity, if not the admiration, while before them stood the great Regenerator, looking at once proudly indifferent, intellectually wild, and as exquisitely unlike an

English gentleman, as it was possible for any man to do.

“What a group!” exclaimed the delighted Mrs. Gibson, with a degree of gratified vanity, which could hardly have been greater had she been herself conscious of possessing in her single person the attractions and the fame of all these. She had already presented her highly favoured friend to both the ladies, and now, with the delightful consciousness of having a right to be first of the first in her own drawing-room, she placed an arm-chair in the front of the sofa, and turning her back upon the rest of the company, determined to lead the conversation to subjects that should suit them all, and at the same time bring her own peculiar talents into play.

“How rarely it is in our power to bring together three persons so worthy of being known to each other!” she said, looking successively at each. “You have no idea what delight I have in being the composer of such a trio! I feel like an alchemist, who having long medi-

tated on the value of sundry precious materials, brings them together, and finds he has produced —GOLD.”

Mrs. Sherbourne looked meekly in the face of Mrs. Gibson, and performed a languid smile ; and then, raising her large eyes to the face of Marchmont, looked steadily at him for a moment, with an earnestness of examination which evidently rendered her perfectly oblivious of what she was about. After which a sort of slight trembling seemed to run through her frame—it might have been a quiver of delight—or it might have been a species of timid shudder, such as weak mortals are supposed to feel in presence of a being of superior nature to themselves—or it might have been that she read her fate, literary, amatory, or financial, in his expressive eyes (for it may be observed that though Mrs. Sherbourne dressed very elegantly, she never omitted an opportunity of intimating the lowly state of her exchequer to very nearly all who would listen to her); whatever the cause of this steadfast gaze, and its subsequent effect upon her frame, it was so far successful

as to awaken the attention and pique the curiosity of its object. He stood meanwhile, looking as tall and intellectual as he possibly could, but though far from being insensible to the remarkable attack made upon him by the eyes of the poetess, he as yet still persevered in his intention of bestowing himself chiefly on the beauty and the heiress; and though he gave Mrs. Sherbourne in return one of those queer mystical looks, which like her own, produced its chief effect by setting the object of it to interpret what it could possibly mean, his glances were chiefly bent upon Clara. But he almost believed that she had not heard the exciting words of Mrs. Gibson, nor perceived that he himself was looking at her. Had he believed it quite, he would not have deceived himself.

“I have had the honour of seeing Miss Meddows before,” he said, in a deep low tone, worthy of Kean in the days of his best whisper.

“Have you?” said Mrs. Gibson, briskly; “I thought you told me that you had never met her?”

“I never had the happiness of meeting Miss Meddows in society before,” he replied, with a

slight sigh. "But I have seen her, nevertheless."

"Where was it you saw her, then?" demanded Mrs. Gibson. "This sounds quite romantic, doesn't it?"

"I saw her from the Countess of Raymond's box at the Opera. Miss Meddows was in that of Lady Wycomb," he replied.

"And when was that Marchmont?" said Mrs. Gibson, looking exceedingly playful. "You positively must give us a history of the whole affair."

"It will be two years on the fifth of next May," was the solemn answer; delivered with an accent and manner that seemed to have much meaning.

"Upon my word and honour, my dear Miss Meddows, this looks rather suspicious," observed Mrs. Gibson, nodding her head. "You have a capital memory, my good friend. I dare say you could tell us too, what the young lady had on? was it a black dress or white? blue dress, or grey?"

"There are things which, though seemingly

trifling, can never be forgotten," he answered; adding in a very low mutter as he stooped beside the sofa to pick up his glove, thereby bringing his head very near to that of Clara, "and these are of them."

A slight frown contracted the brow of the favoured lady, while the vexed poetess vowed a little vow that she would make him turn away from the proud beauty, and live in her eyes only, before the evening was over, though it should cost her the labour of a whole volume to effect it.

If Mr. Marchmont perceived Miss Meddows's frown, he did not heed it, for drawing a chair to the corner of the sofa on which she sat, and so seating himself in it, as to place himself exactly behind her, he entered into conversation with a low voice, and with his hand so resting upon one of the cushions as to give her very much the appearance of being supported against his arm. Inexpressibly provoked, she drew so closely towards Mrs. Sherbourne as considerably to annoy her in the pretty manœuvrings of her miniature person; but this retreat was by

no means an effectual one, and Clara was meditating on the desperate measure of breaking up Mrs. Gibson's "charming group," and crossing the room, when she was relieved by the unexpected approach of Miss Marianne Gibson, who though she had scarcely ever exchanged a dozen words with her, now addressed her as if they had been intimately acquainted for years, saying, "Miss Meddows, if you will come over to my little table, I will show you something that will make you laugh, and I will promise, moreover, that nobody shall come near to plague you."

Clara waited not for any further invitation, but standing up with a bright, grateful smile, passed her arm under that of her deliverer, and accompanied her across the room. There the eccentric Marianne had established herself, as usual, with her writing paper and scissors, her shaded wax-lights and her low chair. "You did look so very unhappy !" said she, opening her little portfolio, as if to search for something, "that I could not help coming to your rescue."

"And most truly do I thank you for it," re-

plied Clara laughing, "I had all the inclination in the world to run away, only I knew not where to run to."

"I can secrete you here very safely," said Marianne, pointing to her own chair; "that is to say, if you really prefer so inglorious a position to all the honours from which I snatched you."

"I do prefer it," replied Clara, placing herself in the offered chair; "and now I hope you mean to sit down by me, and show me what it is I am to laugh at."

Without replying, Marianne drew forth a group of four figures, cut in white paper, and laying them on the dark cover of her portfolio, asked her new friend if she had ever seen any thing like them.

"What miraculous rapidity!" exclaimed Clara, "and what singular talent! There we are, as like as paper can make us!" and in truth the group presented an extremely clever resemblance of the sofa, as it had been a few moments before, with Mrs. Gibson in front, and Mr. Marchmont in the rear of it. "And

do you serve all your friends and acquaintance thus ?” demanded Clara, looking at her with considerable interest and curiosity. “ Yes, a good many of them,” was the reply. “ It is really my only resource on my mother’s tremendous Tuesday evenings—I do not sing, neither can I talk blue, and so I indulge myself with a quire of paper and a pair of scissors.”

“ And do you always show the people your caricatures of them as honestly as you have done to me ? You are very courageous.”

“ No ! There you are especially favoured—I would not venture, for instance, to show this to the pair opposite ;” and she drew forth another milk-white group, nicely cut, and having an easily recognisable resemblance to Sir George Meddows and Miss Almeria Gibson, who were seated, Marianne said, nearly opposite ; the lady reclining very gracefully against the retreating back of a very deep arm-chair, at the risk of exposing a well-dressed and pretty foot and ankle, and the gentleman seated very close beside, or rather in front of her, holding his hat between his knees, and peering with an

air of rather undoubting confidence in her face.

“Pray, Miss Meddows,” said Marianne, as she corrected her work by an additional snip or two, “do you happen to know which of the five Miss Gibsons it is to whom a partial relative left twenty thousand pounds?”

“No, indeed, I do not,” replied Clara, looking surprised at the question.

“The pains they take to keep it secret will never answer,” said Marianne; “for let a gentleman advance as far as he will in the utterance of preliminary sweetness, and the performance of preliminary *æillades*, he would have no scruple at retreating again to the greatest imaginable distance, if he discovered that he had made a blunder. Don’t you agree with me, Miss Meddows?”

“Upon my word you puzzle me,” said Clara, “I hardly know what you are talking about, and not at all to what persons you allude.”

“Well then—never mind. Only, if you should happen to meet with any gentleman, either old or young, who might, in your opinion,

be likely to make a mistake upon the subject, you may just mention, if you like it, that it is the little quiz Marianne Gibson who has the fortune, and that she means to bestow herself and it upon a clerical cousin, as soon as he has taken orders."

Miss Meddows would certainly have thought this unexpected confidence very unnecessary, had she not remarked as she listened to it, so decided a flirtation between her father and the tender Almeria, as convinced her that it was not made without design.

"Will you keep this place for me if I wander away from it for a minute or two?" said Clara, suddenly determined to communicate the information she had received to her father. The well-meaning but strange Marianne nodded assent, and Miss Meddows crossed the room to the spot where her father was so agreeably occupied as not to perceive her approach till she was close to him.

"Will you take us to look at your mamma's new illustrations for her Milton?" said she, addressing Almeria, "I perceive a table there

quite covered with them." To refuse was impossible, and, however reluctantly, the fair lady was obliged to rise, and break up the delightful *tête-à-tête*.

"You will come, too, papa, will you not?" said Clara.

"Unquestionably!—you have chosen a conductor, Clara, whom all the world would wish to follow."

Having reached the table, Miss Meddows began to turn over the heterogeneous mass of engravings which lay upon it; and after employing herself thus for a minute or two, said, "I wish you would ask your mamma to come here—no one can explain all this so well as herself." Again the vexed Almeria felt compliance to be unavoidable, and obeyed.

"What a strange collection!" said Clara, pointing to one or two prints, most ludicrously incongruous. Sir George smiled. "By the way, papa," she added in a whisper, "I have just acquired an important piece of information.—It is that quiet looking girl, Marianne, who has the independent fortune. I have heard a

number of various reports about it, but my present information comes from the best possible authority, being no other than the young lady herself."

"Are you in earnest, Clara?"

"Yes, perfectly—she has been quite opening her heart to me, and told me that she was engaged to be married to her cousin as soon as he had taken orders."

"How devilish hot the room is!—Don't you find it so? You don't mean to stay here all night, I suppose, do you?"

"Not quite, papa.—But I must not go away yet."

"No, I suppose not. The carriage is waiting, is it not?"

"I believe so. The servants know that they are always to wait here."

"Then it shall take me down to my club, and come back directly for you.—You need not say any thing about my having bolted." Clara bent her fair head in acquiescence; Sir George glided very skilfully behind a group surrounding a tray of ices, and when Almeria returned with

her mother, Miss Meddows stood before the Miltonic table alone.

“Have I not got on amazingly since you saw it last, my dear Miss Meddows?” demanded Mrs. Gibson.

“You have, indeed. The work is swelling into most magnificent dimensions,” replied Clara, hardly able to repress a smile at the restless glances which the forsaken Almeria was throwing round in all directions—and throwing in vain.

“There is a great deal of original humour in this idea, Miss Meddows,” said Mrs. Gibson, taking up a little etching that lay upon the table. “This was Mr. Dalrymple’s idea. You see it is the breaking up of the school at Dotheboy’s hall—Nicholas Nickleby, you know—and Mr. Dalrymple advises me of all things to make it illustrate the rebellion of the angels. The idea is admirable. Every body is delighted with it.”

Poor Clara took up the little print, and looked at it with a most wavering degree of attention; whereupon Mr. Gibson ventured to

join himself to the party, bringing Charles with him, whom as only a third or fourth-rate lion on this very splendid evening he had ventured to seize upon, and initiate into all the Gibson superiorities, in every branch of art, science, and, as he comprehensively expressed it, every species of intellectual development. Clara had now to endure hearing the whole history of the illustration of *Paradise Lost* chronologically recorded to Charles Chesterfield by Mr. Gibson, and commented upon with very copious annotations by Mrs. Gibson; but one or two novices happily joining themselves to the group, Clara ventured to return to her place by Marianne.

“I never shrink from doing what I think is right,” said that very odd person again, making room for her—“and I think that it is very likely you adopt the same rule.—Here is another paper portrait for you if you feel inclined to look at it.”

Meanwhile, Mrs. Sherbourne, greatly favoured by circumstances, and deeply intent upon obtaining her object, suffered not the

golden opportunity to be wasted, but as soon as Mrs. Gibson was called away, so completely and ably brought all her artillery to play on the vanity and sundry other fine feelings of Mr. Marchmont, that he speedily found himself consoled for the escapade of Miss Meddows, and devoted himself to the poetess quite as much as he thought it likely his invaluable friend Mrs. Gibson would approve.

“May I hope that you will condescend to call on me, Mr. Marchmont?” said Mrs. Sherbourne, when the party was beginning to disperse; and she said it with a look and tone of such touching gentleness, that few men could have avoided replying as he did.—“Will I? Good heaven, what a question! Tell me where I may find you?”

The answer was a silent one, and consisted in her slipping into his hand a card bearing her address. This done, she too glided amidst the crowd, and disappeared.

Charles Chesterfield during the whole of this time had never for a moment the fate of his tale out of his thoughts, but till the departure

of Mrs. Sherbourne he had not found courage to approach the patron upon whom his destiny hung. At length, however, after she had left the room he made a desperate effort, for his anxiety was literally greater than he could bear, and breaking away from Mr. Gibson, Mrs. Gibson, three Miss Gibsons, and all the glories of their "Paradise Lost," he made his way to the sofa on which Mr. Marchmont was now lying, apparently half asleep, and said to him—

"Well, sir—do you think it will do?"

"Who?—what, my dear fellow?" returned the startled philosopher, rubbing his eyes—
"What in the world are you talking about?"

"The story I gave you this morning, Mr. Marchmont.—Will you give it a place in *The Regenerator*?"

"Upon my word that is a question I cannot answer, Chesterfield—for I have not looked at it."

A man must be as vain as our poor Charles Chesterfield to suffer all he did at that moment.

CHAPTER VII.

Mrs. Sherbourne pours balm into Charles's Wounds—An Interview between Mr. Marchmont and Mrs. Sherbourne—Poetry of the Nineteenth Century.

NOT even the last words of Mrs. Sherbourne, though they were all that his heart could wish, had the power of healing the wound which Charles had received from the negligent answer of Marchmont; yet they were very delightful words too, and doubtless produced a salutary effect, though far short of a cure.

Having just strength sufficient to hear Mr. Marchmont's answer without falling to the ground, he wisely determined not to tax the over-strained nerves any longer, and without

attempting any reply, instantly turned round and left the room.

Mrs. Sherbourne, who had prevailed on a servant to go out and seek a coach for her, was still waiting for it at the door of the dining-parlour, enveloped in a huge domino sort of cloak which she had brought with her from Rome. Poor Charles neither noticed nor knew her, but though she had found it impossible to give him more than a nod while in the presence of the great editor,—the fate-bestowing WE of *The Regenerator*,—she seemed quite enchanted to meet him now, and stretching out her little hand, gently arrested his rapid steps.

“Do not fly away at such a rate till I have spoken one word to you!” she said. “Remember! the rehearsal is fixed for Friday next. I cannot ask you to come to see me before that day, as I shall be greatly occupied, but if you will call for me at eleven—perhaps you will bring a coach with you—we can go to the theatre together, and it will be a great comfort to me to have your support during the trying scene. You have no notion, I am sure, of the

torture to which the performers put one on these occasions! Ah! Mr. Chesterfield! our profession is certainly the noblest in the world! But it sometimes brings tremendous agitation!"

These words sounded like the voice of an oracle upon the ears of Charles, and brought all the valuable consolation which could be derived from knowing that in the noble brother and sisterhood to which he belonged there might be more hearts than one as troubled and trembling as his own. Somewhat cheered, and at any rate deeply grateful, Charles not only promised to be faithfully punctual to the delightful appointment which she proposed, but gallantly offering his arm stood beside her till her vehicle arrived, and handed her into it with a sort of careful tenderness which proved that, notwithstanding his troubles, he had not forgotten his visit to her little parlour in Mount-street.

We will not, in pity to the reader, follow poor Charles to his anxious, restless bed. Suffice it to say that he passed an extremely bad night, and, falling asleep towards the morning,

dreamed such a feverish quantity of literary adventures, and misadventures, that he awoke pale, unrefreshed, and most utterly miserable. During the day he took at least four-and-twenty different walks, never choosing to be absent from his lodgings for many minutes together, lest a note from Mr. Marchmont might come in the interval, yet loathing the sight of pens, ink, and paper too heartily to permit his making use of them. Nay, he loathed the sight of a book too. It created a painful emotion of envy towards the author, *for it was printed!*

While this miserable day thus wore away with Charles, his mighty master was probably employing his time in a much more amusing manner than if he had devoted it to the critical perusal of the poor youth's *première tentative*. Quite as early as it is usual for literary ladies to be ready for morning visits, Mr. Marchmont was at Mrs. Sherbourne's door. To say the truth, she had been for some time anxiously watching for his approach, an occupation for which a parlour window gives great facilities; and the moment she perceived him present him-

self at the door of the house, she flew to that of her parlour, and uttered, in rapid but distinct accents to the maid, as she passed to open it, "Let this gentleman in; but if any body else calls before he goes away, say that I am out."

The morning toilet of Mrs. Sherbourne has already been described as *bien soignée*, and exceedingly attractive, even on ordinary occasions, and it was certainly rather more so than usual now: indeed, to a woman *à prétention*,—and Mrs. Sherbourne was pre-eminently such in every sense of the phrase—no visit is more likely to excite a careful preparation than that of the editor of a critical journal, himself still received by way of a young man, still *garçon*, and still *fat*.

Mrs. Sherbourne knew perfectly well what she was about, nor must the slightest approach to indiscretion be attributed to her. On the contrary, whatever she did on this occasion, and on many others, which by the ignorant might have been thought to have that appearance, deserved to be described by an epithet very

decidedly the reverse. But Mrs. Sherbourne would as soon have thought of putting her impassioned language, her original views on all subjects, her boasted knowledge of Italian, or any other of her manifold accomplishments upon the shelf, as her beauty. Her prose and poetry, her hands and feet, her wit, and her white shoulders, her philosophy and her long ringlets, her large eyes and her little Italian vocabulary, were one and all part and parcel of herself, and one and all part and parcel “of that by which she lived.”

“This is so kind!—so very kind, Mr. Marchmont!” she said, as the gentleman entered, “bowed upon her hand,” and expressed his hopes that his early visit did not derange her occupations.

“My occupations? Alas! What occupation can you attribute to me that I should weigh against the pleasure of seeing you? In your position, Mr. Marchmont you know not what it is to feel as I do. Shall I pity you? I think I will, for never knowing the delight felt by the hopeless and forlorn, when a cheering ray of light shines upon them from—*above*.”

Mrs. Sherbourne pronounced the last word with a pretty playful smile, and with an action of her delicate hand, which though it a little deranged her slippery shawl, made her look altogether exceedingly graceful and animated.

"Good Heaven! Mrs. Sherbourne! How is it that I have lived thus long, and never known you till now? There is treason somewhere, and I must hunt it out. The herd, the envious herd have plotted to keep us asunder, or we must have met!" exclaimed Marchmont, looking at her with a little real, and an immense deal of pretended admiration. "May I sit by you here?" he said, still holding her hand, and leading her towards the sofa.

"You may," she replied in an accent difficult to describe, but which expressed at once timidity, confidence, incipient friendship, and that sort of pretty consciousness which gives to some ladies the air of a mouse, incessantly expecting to be pounced upon by a cat, but one for whom, by some strange perversity of their nature, they cannot feel all the detestation it ought to inspire.

"Well now, tell me," said Mr. Marchmont,

protectingly, "What is all this I hear about a play of yours that is going to be immediately brought out? Has this little hand been really bold enough to trace the exits and the entrances, the good and evil, the passion and the whim of life, through five long acts? What an extraordinary creature you are!"

"Oh! do not say so! It seems so like laughing at me! But what *can* I do? Alas! you know not my position. Woe is me, Mr. Marchmont, I must do something or perish."

"Perish the universe first," replied her visiter, with enthusiasm. "But why," he added, "should you speak with regret of having been induced to exercise your charming genius upon the very highest order of poetical composition? It is a glory even to have thought of it."

"But oh! the presumption! If you could but imagine the fluttering *here!*" she replied, pressing her hands upon her bosom, "I am quite sure you would pity me."

"Pity!—My charming Mrs. Sherbourne! Pity is a feeling you can never inspire, though many an aching heart may wish you to feel it.

You know this, you must know it, only too well. But tell me frankly—can I be of any use to you ?”

Mrs. Sherbourne understood her business a great deal too well, and had a vast deal too much tact to reply, “ Yes, sir. Be so good as to say, before it appears, that the world are standing tip-toe to witness the first dramatic effort of decidedly the most talented woman in Europe. And afterwards—that years have passed by us, and many more will roll after them, without producing a dramatic work so replete with all the best and highest attributes of that order of composition.” She did not say this ; she only gave him one flash from her large eyes, that seemed vivified by a ray of hope divine, and then throwing herself forward on her little writing-table, she remained silent for a minute or two, and appeared to be weeping, for such windy “ suspiration of forced breath” burst from her fair breast, that it was evident she was strongly agitated, and, in all human likelihood, shedding tears.

“ Dear friend ! let me call you so,” said

Marchmont, taking her hand ; “ what is all this ? You must not be so nervous. The representation of a first play is, I grant you, a tremendous trial of strength, even for a man, and he must have an iron heart, who would not sympathize with such a being as you are, under the same thrilling experiment ! I know it all, I guess every feeling that is now working within you. But look up—look up at me, I entreat you ! If you imagine I have power, imagine too—nay, do more than imagine, be very sure that it shall be stretched to the utmost to do you service. Will not this assurance induce you to look at me once more ? Come, come, I will positively see you smile again.”

“ What an ungrateful wretch I should be if I did not look up ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Sherbourne suddenly raising her head, shaking back her ringlets, and passing her hand over her eyes, as if both literally to dash away any idle drops that might obscure them, and figuratively to send off the heavy cloud that had rested on her spirit.

“ Oh, Heaven ! ” she went on, clasping her

hands together, and piercing the ceiling with her upward gaze ; “ if, *if*, IF I could indulge the wild hope that this drama might appear tolerable to you, I should cast care and sorrow to the winds, and feel at once the proudest and happiest of human beings.”

“ Mrs. Sherbourne,” replied Marchmont, solemnly, “ I do not believe that there is any man in my profession who has the same highly-exalted conscientious feeling about it that I have. My critical articles, down even to the most trifling notices, are written with the most scrupulous and perfectly unbiassed impartiality; neither personal nor party feelings have the slightest share in any word I write; and so deeply important do I think this impartiality to the cause of literature, that I am often made perfectly wretched by perceiving that I am the only individual who acts upon this principle. So far it is due to myself, that I should explain my principles as editor, proprietor, and leading writer of decidedly the most popular journal in Europe. It is a position of immense responsibility, and it is the glory of my life to fill it

worthily. But having eased my conscience by stating this fairly to you, let me go on to say that I am quite confident you have no cause to fear. I have not exercised this perilous calling for so long a time, my charming Mrs. Sherbourne, without having acquired a power almost prophetic, concerning the productions of those with whom I converse. Methinks I hear and feel the different scenes of your drama upon my heart! I know what it must be, nor do I fear to compromise myself unsafely, by assuring you that it shall be very favourably reviewed."

It would be long before a lady not professionally obliged to look thankful, could have called up into her countenance such a prodigious assemblage of grateful feelings as now employed the features of Mrs. Sherbourne; neither were words wanting, though they were short, broken and agitated.

"I bless you!" said she in a voice that trembled like the silver chord of an unstrung lute (to borrow a phrase of her own); "and alas! my blessing, my prayers are all that I have left to give. Oh, Mr. Marchmont! you

know not the trembling weakness of the insect you would save from perishing. One hostile word from you would act upon my very existence, like water shot at the poor humming-bird, which, light though it be, crushes its gossamer wing, and stills its feeble sound for ever !”

“Mrs. Sherbourne !” exclaimed the great critic in a voice of rapture : “as I hope to live, you are the most poetical creature I have met with for a century. You must work out that thought for my paper—it is quite beautiful. Do not shake your head as much as to say I must not flatter you—I never do flatter any body, and I believe in my soul that to flatter *you* would be impossible. You may always trust me, my charming friend ; for I never say any thing which I do not think, nor even think any thing which is not just and true. You may trust my heart for the first, and my head for the last, without danger of being disappointed in either.”

“ Good Heaven ! what a privilege it is to listen to you !” replied Mrs. Sherbourne. “ Let

me but see you often enough, and my mind will be corrected of unnumbered failings which now beset it. What is now all weakness, would be nurtured into strength."

"Yet I think it would be a great pity to change your mind from what I now find it," he returned, looking at her with very evident admiration.

"If you see me often it will be rather because I wish to study you as you are, than from any inclination to make you different. I wish I had the privilege of ransacking that delicate little desk, Mrs. Sherbourne," he added, playfully drawing it towards him, and pretending to raise the lid, already somewhat open, from the recess below having more papers in it than it could well contain, "may I?"

"Would that there were aught within that lid that you could think worthy for a moment to detain your eye!" she replied with a gentle sigh.

"But no! you would seek in vain."

"Then you confess there is *something* there that might be read!" said he, "though nothing that you deem worth reading?"

“ Oh, yes! there is abundance there, written in a tolerably legible character, if that were all required to make it worthy of notice,” was her answer.

“ And supposing I should say that it was all I required, provided the hand which traced the characters were your own, would that suffice to procure me a sight of it?” demanded Marchmont, rather tenderly. “ Say; may I go further? Tell me, tell me.”

“ I should answer that you were at liberty to read any composition there, provided it were finished. It would be idle to give you a few lines only, thrown off perhaps in a moment of agitation, which calmer reason sufficed the next moment to quell. Do not ask me to do this, and I will refuse you nothing else that is there,” she replied.

“ You shall yourself select for me,” he said.

Snatching a handful of her ever rebellious shawl, and once more covering one of her shoulders with it, Mrs. Sherbourne silently set to work to obey him; and languidly drawing the little desk towards her she began with the

tips of her pretty fingers] to turn over the different scraps which it contained in the most graceful manner imaginable.

“Alas !” she said, shaking her head, as one after another she set them aside as unworthy the critic’s eye, “they are every one of them the record of some strong paroxysm of feeling, which were better perhaps forgotten than remembered. But here is one that I sometimes love to look upon ; and, shall I own the truth, to weep over ; for it recalls a rush of emotion that almost took the force of inspiration. Ah ! Mr. Marchmont ! if you wish to look into my very soul, read this.”

Marchmont extended his hand to receive the paper, and gallantly kissed that which presented it. He then read the title aloud, “The Moon-stricken One’s Monody.”

“Pretty ! very pretty ! My dearest Mrs. Sherbourne, grant me one favour more—read these lines to me yourself?”

“I will if I can, but I almost doubt my strength.” Then shaking back her ringlets,

suffering her shawl to fall unchecked, and fixing her eyes on some object unquestionably outside the walls of her little parlour, she began:

THE MOON-STRICKEN ONE'S MONODY.

A lay for the Lady Moon! Lady of light,
 All pellucid and lonely, why wanders thy ray?
 Why, wan, weary, woe-begone queen of the night,
 Why shunn'st thou the brilliance and splendour of day?
 Ah! who shall say?

Yet, as palely thou paces thy path through the sky,
 Thy loved light illumines one worshipper true;
 And oh! how ecstatic to think none but I
 Am awake here below, and above none but you,
 In the welkin blue.

When midnight in murkiness mars the sky's vault,
 And their rage by dread murmurs the elements mark,
 Blood, murders, and massacres—not my own fault—
 Throng thick through my brain, and my soul is all dark—
 While watch-dogs bark!

But when tempests are hushed, and in glory serene
 Thou reign'st, Lady Moon, in the welkin once more;
 A balmy tranquillity steals o'er the scene,
 And the storm in my fluttering bosom is o'er.
 Thine ever more!

Then fancy-fed poesy wells forth in song,
And meanders untaught into lunatic lays ;
Elysium ecstasies whirl me along,
And intellect soars above pedantry's gaze,
Mid the stormy maze !

Hail hallucinations ! Bright visions of love
Envelop my soul with creations of light !
Ineffable essences flutter above,
And flood my fond feelings with flame in their flight,
Through the depths of night.

'Twas thus a Moon-stricken One sighed forth her tale ;
Then meekly to Destiny bowed her fair head ;
And while one rebel tear dewed her cheek cold and pale,
" Make my grave 'neath the moonbeam ! There lay
me," she said,

" There—there make my bed."

Nothing can be conceived more touchingly sweet and solemn than Mrs. Sherbourne's manner of reading these lines ; but when she reached the two last, her voice failed her, and had not Mr. Marchmont sat near enough to have read the page as it dropped upon her knee, he must have lost them ; for the "rebel tear" of which she sang, sprang unbidden to her eye, and drowned its own harmonious record ere it was spoken !

" Matchless minstrel !" exclaimed the critic

in a tone of passionate admiration ; “ when you would bribe your reviewer, fail not to read your productions to him yourself. No being of mortal mould can resist it. The lines are delicious, but the delivery of them was divine ! My dear Mrs. Sherbourne,” he added, picking up the fallen leaf, “ let me have a memorial of this hour ! Give me these lines ! Upon my soul I cannot part with them ! ”

Mrs. Sherbourne could not instantly make up her mind as to what she had better do, and she skilfully placed her embroidered pocket-handkerchief before her eyes while she hesitated. In truth, the question before her was not altogether an easy one. It very rarely happened that Mrs. Sherbourne, even in her most fascinating flirtations, forgot that the first great object in life, after five and thirty, is the *wherewithal* by which all that she most loved and liked was to be obtained. It was not therefore very likely that this wherewithal should escape her memory at the present moment ; for it so happened that she thought the great master one of the ugliest fellows she had ever beheld,

and would as soon have thought of giving away one of her rhapsodies to the first black-muzzled mastiff she met in the street, as to him. But he was a reviewer ; one of the omnipotent we, a member of the secret tribunal, in whose frown there was death, and whose smile brought food, lodging, hackney-coaches, and satin-gowns. So she withdrew her handkerchief, looked up into his face with a delightful smile, and said,

“ Do with me as you will, my most kind friend ! I am only afraid that you know too well the pleasure with which I yield to your request. But you are too generous to despise me for it—I know you are ! ”

Mr. Marchmont answered her with one of the most grateful smiles that he ever produced ; and uttering something about that day's having opened to him a new era in his existence, hastily took his leave, in order to transcribe her charming lines in time for the press that was already at work upon the next number of *The Regenerator*.

CHAPTER VIII.

Country Correspondents—Inspiration—Kindness of Sir George Meddows—A Rehearsal—Disappointment.

By return of post, Charles Chesterfield received answers to the two letters he had despatched to Maplebury; and by a movement which had more of feeling than reflection in it, he opened that of Bessy's first, and read as follows :

“ Dear Charles,

“ I think your last letter has done me a great deal of good. It was not very long, to be sure ; but somehow or other I found out a great deal in it. First, I found out that you are very well pleased and contented at being where you are ;

and that must of course make your friends pleased and contented too. And next I found out that you were become a great man, which I remember of old that you had a great fancy for, and therefore this must make you very happy also; so here again was something to make your friends rejoice. The next thing I found out was, that it would be very foolish for me to go on expecting that you would write me long letters, when you have more learned business on your hands than you can possibly get through; and so that, you know, will prevent my being disappointed any more. Your little friend, Charles, will therefore try for the future to give her mind to her dairy and her flowers, and not trouble herself any more about this great London, which, as you truly say, she can know nothing at all about. And now good bye, dear Charles.

“ If my letter is too long I hope you will not have read it, but just go at once to the end of it, and find that I write myself what I am quite sure that I shall ever be,

“ Your affectionate friend,

“ ELIZABETH PARNELL.”

“It is lucky, at any rate,” said the young author, folding up this epistle, and throwing it to some distance from him across the table—
“it is lucky at any rate, that I don’t think this silly, ignorant little girl quite so charming a person as I used to do; for it is clear enough that she does not trouble herself about me. Well! it is all just as it ought to be. She is born for her dairy, and I for *The Regenerator*. She and her flowers will vegetate together at Maplebury, and I and my pen will live together in London. Now then for Mr. Westbrook.”

He opened the letter, rather fearing that he should find it exceedingly long, but almost started on perceiving that it was, on the contrary, exceedingly short. It ran thus:—

“Dear Charles Chesterfield,

“My intellectual darkness is such as to render me quite incapable of comprehending your letter, and I really will not ask you to write any more till you can be what you call ‘more explicit.’ The only part of your despatch intelligible to me, is that wherein you inquire about my cat. She is very well, I thank you: and

perhaps if she had passed as much time as you have in the great emporium that you talk of, she might have been sufficiently propelled forward to join her kind regards to mine.

“I am, dear Charles Chesterfield,

“Your hearty well-wisher,

“RICHARD WESTBROOK.”

Charles knit his brows. He did not throw the letter from him as he had done that of Bessy; but read it again with a wish to discover what it was which made the manner of it so particularly disagreeable to him.

“I shall write to him no more,” he said. “Ignorance is bad enough at all times, but where it is joined with—with—with impertinence,” he muttered at length, “it is intolerable.”

Yet after he had found the word, it did not quite please him. The notion of his calling anything that the so-lately venerated Mr. Westbrook could say to him, “impertinent,” had something so monstrous in it, that he felt as ill at ease as if he had been made to stand upon

his head, or placed in any other unnatural position. Yet he was in no humour to force his worse nature into making the *amende* to his better one; and thus he remained, with that sort of battle going on within him, which is as uncomfortable to the moral part of the system, as some digestive insolubilities to the physical.

How the struggle might have ended if he had been left perfectly to himself cannot be known; for while he still held the letter clasped, by no means affectionately, in his hand, yet still feeling some troublesome recollections, pricking, as it were, at his heart, the postman's always-exciting knock was again heard, and another letter delivered to him the moment after.

This was from Mr. Marchmont, and contained only the following lines.

“ Dear Sir,

“ I shall print it in the next number. Let this encourage you—and let me have about a dozen pages more in any style you will, by the one after. If you can excite yourself a little, and knock me off a few spirited stanzas upon

Love, or Liberty, or any other theme of a popular kind, they shall appear likewise.

“Yours faithfully,

“MARCHMONT.

“P.S. If you find it necessary you are quite at liberty to put on the golden spurs.”

Here was a panacea for all his disagreeable feelings at once. Bessy, Mr. Westbrook, Mablebury, Charlton, the whole wide world and all the beings in it, were by this brilliant burst of light and joy thrown so completely into the shade, that his mind remained scarcely conscious of their existence.

“Long looked for, come at last!” he exclaimed, starting up, and clasping his hands together in ecstasy. “Never, no never again, will I torture myself, as I have done since last Tuesday. The die is cast then, and the hazard won! Excite myself! Gracious heaven! Am I not excited? Thou art the elixir, Marchmont, that can rouse my spirit best. Yet will I not neglect any other that may be within my reach.”

While thinking or speaking thus, Charles

arranged all his implements for writing, and having rang the bell, and ordered that he was on no account to be disturbed, he locked his door, took off his cravat, pushed up his hair from his forehead, following very nearly the style of arrangement in this respect which he had observed in Lord Byron's portraits, though, to do him justice, without greatly thinking what he was about; and then throwing himself forward over his desk, his right hand holding his pen, and his left supporting his forehead, he felt very nearly as much inspired as he could wish.

As far as rhyming went, Charles really and truly had very uncommon facility, and this did him good service now; for as fast as the riot rout of discordant thoughts and images, so readily generated in a young brain, rose up before him, they were booked in lines of ten syllables each with the most pungent delight, and very little trouble, if any.

"This it is to be inspired!" exclaimed the young man. "Gracious Heaven, how these verses flow! Thought seems my slave and

poetry my handmaid! Marchmont, dear Marchmont! this do I owe to thee! How do I bless thee for it!"

It would be vain to attempt following in prose, a state of mind so pre-eminently poetical. From this time, till about six o'clock in the afternoon, he continued writing with little intermission, and then he felt so completely exhausted, not in mind, but in body, that he recollected with very considerable satisfaction that he was to dine in Bruton-street at seven. Never before had the restorative materials of the baronet's table appeared so attractive to his imagination; a feeling, by the way, in itself truly poetical.

Meanwhile he looked at his own table, covered with sheets of paper, all more or less filled with short and long lines, with inexpressible satisfaction.

"He asked me for one poem, and I have already composed seven!" thought he. "He shall choose among them, and may think, perhaps, that he has found a pupil not quite unworthy of him! Great Heaven! What glorious

proof of fecundity is here! Nature, I thank thee!"

Notwithstanding the exhaustion of which he was sensible, he appeared in Sir George Meadows's drawing-room with a look of greater animation than he had ever before worn there. Poor Clara still remembered her uncourteous dismissal of him a few days before, in a very penitent spirit, and though neither well nor happy, exerted herself to converse with him.

The tone in which he replied to her was so animated and unembarrassed, that Mrs. Longuéville looked up with much the same expression of surprise on her elegantly languid countenance, which it might have worn had she heard a cat bark, or a dog mew, and she turned upon her less observant brother a glance that said plainly enough "What can this mean?"

The family had no guest at dinner, save Charles; and when the ladies withdrew, Sir George himself became so much struck with the change, that instead of saying as he had repeatedly done before, "Now, Charles, you may

be off if you like it; don't stand on any ceremony with me—of course you do not wish to sit and drink wine.” Instead of this, he now said,

“You must tell me what you have been about, Charles. I am quite sure some good luck has happened to you. What is it? you must have no reserves with me, my dear boy.”

“You are quite right, Sir George,” replied the *protégé*, “I certainly have been the most fortunate fellow in the world in having been introduced to Mr. Marchmont. I certainly do feel myself at this moment to be one of the most fortunate men in the world.”

“Mr. Marchmont! and who the devil is Mr. Marchmont, Chesterfield?” demanded Sir George, with something like a sneer

A feeling, certainly not far removed from contempt, produced a smile in return upon the lips of Charles.

“Mr. Marchmont, Sir George,” he replied, “is the editor and principal writer of *The Regenerator*.” And here he made a full stop very pregnant with meaning.

“*The Regenerator*? Oh, ay, that’s one of the monthlies, isn’t it? A little in the raw-head-and-bloody-bones Radical line, I’ve a notion. But that matters not a pin’s head, Charles, if you can get money out of him. Has he engaged you to write for his mag.?”

“Yes, Sir George, I am happy to say he has,” returned the proud young man.

“I am devilish glad to hear it, my dear boy. And what has he agreed to give you? You must stand up for a good price, remember that. What is he to give you, Charles, for every page you write? I don’t understand very much about the kind of thing; but I suppose you are paid by the quantity. How much shall you be able to get by the week, my dear fellow? Be sure to get ready money, mind that. How much will it come to by the week, Charles?”

“I have made no calculation, sir,” replied Charles, colouring.

“No! That is not by any means a good way of doing business, I promise you. It does not require to be an Apollo in order to perceive that, Charles. But if you have made no calculation

as to the exact sum, which you may be able to get just at first, I presume you know something of Mr. Regenerator's price current, don't you? I presume you know what his terms generally are? and that will enable you to calculate."

"No, indeed, Sir George, I do not. I know nothing about his terms."

"Is that because you are too shy to ask him, Charles, or because you are too young and boy-like to have given any thought to the matter at all?" demanded the baronet, gravely.

"I do not think it is owing either to the one or to the other, sir," replied the young man with some spirit. "I know that if I continue to devote myself to literature, and continue to be successful, it is reasonable to suppose that I shall make money by it; I have thought enough on the subject to know that. And as to my being too shy to speak to Mr. Marchmont on any subject, I think that can hardly be, since I have found courage to speak to him concerning my own compositions—a theme which I must conceive to be more embarrassing than any other."

Though this was said with downcast eyes, and a particularly demure and modest look, Sir George failed not to detect something of professional *cliqueism* in it, which a little disgusted him, and he was on the very verge of pouring forth a volley of lively ridicule upon authors, and authorlets, when he suddenly changed his mind, and filling his own glass, and pushing the claret to his companion, said instead,

“ My dear Chesterfield ! You have no idea how I love and honour you for the sentiments by which I perceive that you are actuated. Your language convinces me, that however much your faculties may be occupied on that most ennobling of all pursuits—literature, you nevertheless, have found time to remember that it ought to be a source of profit, as well as of honour to its professors. But, at the same time, I read in your very heart of hearts, my dear fellow, that your soul is of too generous a nature ever to be degraded by that vilest of all passions, the love of money. God forbid that any thing should ever occur to poison your mind on this point. I know the world, my dear boy, better perhaps than most men, and all

my experience has gone to teach me that no human being was ever capable of conceiving, or of doing any thing great who had not a generous contempt for mere pecuniary considerations. An open hand and a yielding heart are the invariable concomitants of genius, as much as a suspicious temper and niggardly disposition are the reverse ; and nothing under heaven could persuade me that a young fellow over anxious about money, would ever become an author of celebrity."

Charles listened to this harangue with great admiration and respect. He entertained a little private suspicion that Sir George Meddows was not much of a reading man, but he looked up to him as a person of high fashion, and consummate knowledge of the world, and the opinions he now pronounced, made, as they were intended to do, a very strong and lasting impression on his mind, and indeed greatly raised his opinion of the speaker.

" Indeed, Sir George, I believe you are quite right," he replied ; " and it is a great pleasure to me to hear that such is your opinion, because it

teaches me not to mistrust my own. I do think that the love of money is a most degrading passion."

"That is just like you, Charles. That is just like your usual acuteness and good sense. But I must prove to you, my dear fellow, that I don't preach what I would not practise. It will be some time yet before you will be in possession of your fortune. Let me lend you some money, Charles, I am sure you must want it."

Young Chesterfield coloured, but it was with gratitude and pleasure. He had been for some days considerably tormented by his doubts as to the best manner of confessing to his father, that notwithstanding all Sir George Meddows's excessive kindness, he still found it was absolutely necessary that he should chiefly live at his own expense. This he knew had not been contemplated by his family when he left home, and he was terribly afraid that when it was communicated to his father, together with a petition for a loan to supply his wants till he became of age, he should be told in reply that the best thing he could do would be to return home.

To be enabled to avoid this much-dreaded communication, therefore, was the greatest benefit that could be conferred on him, and his gratitude for it was in proportion to the relief it brought. Like all other young people suddenly become possessed of money, but who have had no practical means of ascertaining its relative value, his idea of the wealth he was about to possess was most absurdly disproportioned to the reality, and accordingly he felt no shadow of anxiety at the idea of forestalling a portion of it; he eagerly replied, therefore, and with much less embarrassment than might have been expected,

“I am very much obliged to you, indeed, Sir George, and I won’t deny that I shall be exceedingly glad to have a little money advanced me, between this time and December, without troubling my father about it.”

“That’s right, Charles; I love you for your frankness. What is the good of having a friend unless he is ready and willing to help us in time of need? How much should you like to have, my dear boy? Ask freely, and without the slightest hesitation.”

“Why a hundred pounds, Sir George, would, I should think, be enough for every thing, tailor’s bill and all.”

“Then a hundred pounds you shall have. Come with me at once into the library, and I will write you a check for it. I am quite delighted, Chesterfield, that it came into my head to offer it.”

The whole of this transaction made a deep impression on Charles. It not only relieved him from a great anxiety, but the manner in which it was done was so pleasant, and amiable, as to create a degree of affection infinitely greater than he had ever expected to feel for Sir George Meddows.

It seemed at this time as if all things conspired to make the young adventurer happy. His purse was full of money; he had made many invaluable acquaintances; Sir George was all kindness: Clara all sweetness and condescension; and he was quite certain that he should see his own composition in print before many days were over.

The next morning rose upon him with the

agreeable recollection that he was to call upon Mrs. Sherbourne, and go with her to the rehearsal of her play. Without troubling Mr. Dalrymple's valet, or any body else, Charles had already found his way to the pit of one of the great theatres, and experienced all the wonder and all the enjoyment which ever attends a first theatrical exhibition to a young and imaginative person. When people grow older, and what is commonly called wiser, they know that if any portion of this sort of mystical pleasure is to be felt again, the machinery by which it is brought about, from the *Prima Donna* down to the contrivance which produces moonlight, must be seen, only as it is intended to be seen; but with Charles, there was still all the eager curiosity attendant upon the development of mystery, to make him long for a literal peep behind the scenes, and independent of all authorial, gallant, and sentimental reasons for enjoying the idea of this expedition, he had over and above the irrepressible delight of a boy.

He found Mrs. Sherbourne, not exactly ready,

but ready to get ready as soon as he should arrive.

“How can I thank you enough for this amiable attention?” she said. “Dear Mr. Chesterfield! Do you not feel for me? Can you not imagine the sort of suffocating *battement de cœur* that is besetting me?” and she took his hand and pressed it for a moment to her bosom.

“Oh! yes!” returned Charles, colouring, “I can indeed! Man though I be, I think I should feel almost as nervous as you do under the same circumstances; and yet, Mrs. Sherbourne, I envy you too! What is there I would not give to see a play written by me, performed at Covent Garden or Drury Lane? Yes, Mrs. Sherbourne, I envy you.”

“Dear Chesterfield! Do you really? It is to be sure an elevated, and extremely exciting position. The idea of having hundreds of one’s fellow-creatures hanging as it were upon one’s thoughts, and waiting breathless for the events created by one’s will, has something unspeakably agitating in it. But your turn will come

soon, Chesterfield. I have no doubt in the world that you will eventually devote yourself to the stage. It is in my estimation the last, the best, the highest employment of human genius! Will you mix for me a few drops, about a table-spoonful perhaps, of that red lavender which stands there? And when I have swallowed it, I shall be ready to attend you. Thank Heaven that I have a hand, gentle as yours, to minister to me at this tremendous moment!"

Charles performed the operation very carefully, and the fair poetess after swallowing the dose, put the final pin into her everlasting shawl, and murmured, "Now, then, I am ready!"

Before, however, they had made two steps in advance, she withdrew her arm from that of her *chevalier*, exclaiming,

"Oh, Heavens! I am lost if I go without my pencil and note-book. Stop one moment! I dare say I shall find them in one or other of these drawers." Upon which a search was commenced, which rendered that popular illustration

of confusion, a needle in a bottle of hay, tame and spiritless in comparison to it. Pins, needles, reels of cotton, scissors, penknives, skeins of silk, scraps of ribbon, scraps of lace, and scraps of sticking-plaster, a miniature volume of Moore, much worn, a little Don Juan, worse still, three flacons of aromatic salts, four broken fans, a prodigious number of *ci-devant* white gloves, half a pair of garters, an empty purse, a pair of slippers, and a small wheelbarrow full of old curling-papers—speaking eloquently of the frequent and sudden enfranchisement of those lovely natural embellishments, her cherished ringlets, were all tossed out and in successively, with the most unscrupulous vivacity of search, but neither pencil nor note-book could be found.

“This is annihilating!” she exclaimed, stopping at last, and positively out of breath. “Can you conceive any thing so distressing? Imagine my sitting to listen to all these animals reciting what I have written without the power of making an observation, or marking a blunder! I am excessively sorry, Mr. Chesterfield! but my

going is perfectly out of the question, unless I can obtain what is necessary for the performance of the office for which I am to go." And so saying, she took the pin out of her shawl and sat down, with such a look of despair in the eyes which were thrown up towards him, as must have touched any young gentleman's heart in the world.

"For God's sake do not agitate yourself, my dearest Mrs. Sherbourne," said Charles, soothingly. "Cannot I run out and get what will be necessary. Only explain to me what you want, and I am quite sure I shall be able to find it."

"How excessively kind you are!" she replied, with a smile into which all her misery seemed to melt away. "I know not what I should do without you! Oh, certainly! There is no doubt that you will be able to meet with it at almost any shop in Bond-street. It is not five steps, you know, just across the square. Any thing in the way of tablets will do. Ass's skin, ivory, any thing. Only the pencil must be in a case, I cannot endure the feel of a pencil without a case—but I don't care a straw what it

is ; silver, gold, plain, or ornamented, whatever you like best, it is all the same to me—only, my dear friend, you must make haste. These creatures, to be sure, are never punctual, that's one comfort, but you must really not linger. Be swift as thought, dear friend."

Charles stayed to hear no more, but was out of sight in a moment ; and in wonderfully little time, considering how new he was to the business, he returned with a very elegant set of ivory tablets, and a rich-looking pencil case, not of gold, indeed, but of silver, gilt, elaborately ornamented, and having a fancy seal at the top.

"Now then, my dear Mrs. Sherbourne, I hope you will find here what you want." The lady opened the silver-paper envelope, and bestowed upon him one of those gratefully reproachful glances in payment, which, though a coin that by the scrutinizing physiognomist may be deemed forgeries, seldom doom the circulator to banishment. It is certain that Charles, when he made the purchase, remembered that he had a hundred pounds, minus the few sovereigns in his pocket, safely locked up in

his commode, and the consequence was, that Mrs. Sherbourne was more than pleased, she was delighted—in proof of which, her generous temper, not feeling satisfied by the return already made in the above-mentioned look, led her to draw again upon the same species of property, in which, indeed, her wealth was as boundless as her generosity, and taking up first the little book and then the pencil-case, she impressed a kiss on each, successively. Then silently passing her arm under that of Charles, she led the way to the carriage, into which, after waking the coachman, who had taken advantage of the long interval for the purpose of enjoying a nap, he handed her in, and away they drove at last to the theatre.

For the first few moments of this drive, they were both silent; Charles not very well knowing what to say, and Mrs. Sherbourne very well knowing that it would be most eloquent to say nothing. But at length, timing the moment skilfully, when the rattle of the windows, the wheels, and the steps were hushed by a stoppage of beer-drays, she broke the silence by a sigh, and then said,

“Upon my word your being introduced to me just now, Mr. Chesterfield, seems absolutely providential! You do not yet know half my weakness, you do not yet know how I tremble at the idea of encountering the ill-humour of some, the impertinence of others, and the indifference of all these actors and actresses to whom I am perforce obliged to intrust my reputation in this tremendous experiment. I might hope to fare better, perhaps, could I persuade myself in some degree to court them. But you can have no idea how impossible this would be to me. There is something in my nature that seems to revolt against bestowing a smile, or even a glance of kindness, which is not dictated by my feelings. My heart, my bosom’s lord,” she continued, laying her hand upon her breast, “is the only potentate from whom my *nuncio* smiles are willing messengers. To no other power will they show obedience. And alas! for my interest on this, and all other occasions, that heart but rarely recognises any to whom it wishes to send friendly greeting!”

While the lady was thus talking of her heart, the gentleman began to feel his beating with

more than usual quickness, and without thinking the least in the world what he was about, he took her hand, and exclaimed, "Dearest Mrs. Sherbourne!"

"Charles!—Mr. Chesterfield!—This must not be!" But just then the vehicle fortunately stopped at the stage-door of the theatre, and the coach-door was thrown open by the driver, almost before our hero had time to remark, that notwithstanding Mrs. Sherbourne's declaration, signifying "it must not be," she did not withdraw the imprisoned hand, nor indeed give any other indication of being displeased with him.

Charles, however, was obliged to resign this precious hand in order to get out, which he did with such a mixture of feelings as left him quite unable to make out one from another. It was Mrs. Sherbourne, and Mrs. Sherbourne's hand, and the theatre, and the prologue, and the actors and the actresses, which were all so mixed up together in his head, as to make him feel exceedingly giddy and queer. Having paid and dismissed the coachman, he hastened to repose himself upon the lady's arm, but found

that for the present this happiness was denied him ; Mr. Marchmont having arrived nearly at the same moment as the carriage, had immediately taken possession of Mrs. Sherbourne's hand, arm, shawl, and all.

“ Oh ! Mr. Marchmont ! ” exclaimed Charles, with evident delight. “ How very glad I am to see you ! Is not this lucky, Mrs. Sherbourne ? ”

“ Are we got no further than this yet ? ” mentally ejaculated the accomplished authoress, who rather expected to see Charles change colour and look fierce, at finding her affectionate little arm in possession of another. “ But it matters not. There is a time for all things. Perhaps the boy is right.”

Marchmont nodded with great condescension and intimacy in return to young Chesterfield's salutation, and notwithstanding the happy occupation of his right arm, held out two fingers appertaining to his left, in order unequivocally to testify his approval and his patronage. They then proceeded altogether into the very inmost recesses of the mysterious fabric, with all the mazes of which Mr.

Marchmont appeared to be familiar, Charles following a step behind his companions, marvelling at every thing he saw, and feeling as if the dust beneath his feet were akin to that which of old sullied the sandals of the sacred nine, when wandering upon the sunny heights of their Parnassus. As they were winding their way among sundry masses of trees, prison-chambers, waterfalls, and ball-room decorations, and were in the act of turning a corner, which as yet prevented them seeing the stage, a violent shout of laughter proceeding simultaneously from many persons at once, greeted their ears.

"Some gambols are afloat," thought Charles. "Is it Comus's rabble rout that fills the stage? Or it may be that Jonson's learned sock is on, and that the light laugh rises at the rehearsal of his biting wit."

Another step brought him within sight of the group from whom the merry peal had come, and brought him and his party within theirs. Had a gorgon appeared before them, the effect could hardly have been greater. In an instant every sound of mirth was hushed, and the eight or ten very dingy, dismal-looking personages

from whom it had proceeded, stood profoundly silent, and profoundly still before them.

Mrs. Sherbourne now stepped forward, and addressing Mr. Marvel, who was one of them, said in the most gentle, humble, soothing voice that mermaid, siren, or woman could utter,

“I trust, Mr. Marvel, that I have not kept you waiting? you know not the hurry, the agitation I have been in. Such a multitude of people have been with me this morning, to inquire when the first representation was to take place, all following so closely one upon the other, as to prevent my having time to order my servant to deny me, that it was perfectly out of my power to come before. Am I greatly beyond my time?”

“I am afraid that some of the ladies have been rather discomposed by the delay,” he replied, with more bluntness than observance; “for myself, madam, the devil a bit do I care where I pass the next three-quarters of an hour, but, beyond that, I beg to observe that wild horses could not hold me here.”

“Alas!” ejaculated the authoress, in very considerable alarm, and secretly wishing that

she had not waited for the tablets and pencil-case, pretty though they were. "How shall we be able to do any thing without you, Mr. Marvel? How inexpressibly unfortunate I am! My dearest Mrs. Winterblossom, I hope I see you well. There is such a clamour to know what you are to play! Miss Marksbury, I have been dying to see you! I was in hopes you were coming to call on me, my dear. Good morning, Mr. Crouther! I hope Mrs. Crouther is quite well? Ah! Mrs. Norwood! How excessively kind it is of you to be here! I was so inexpressibly sorry to hear from Mr. Marvel that you were ill! Good morning, Mr. Derment. Isn't it cold to-day? My dear Miss Angelica Freestone, I dream of nothing, day and night, but your dress in the rainbow scene.—Good Heaven! How beautiful you will look! Mr. Periwinkle here! *quel bonheur!* Then you have condescended, I trust, to play the part of *Sylvio*? Utterly unworthy of your exquisite talent as it is, I yet cannot help feeling a passionate desire that you should play it Alas! can you wonder at this? My dear Mrs.

Motherby! you have really brought your little angels here! How can I thank you enough? I was afraid that they were to be just dressed, and put upon the scene at the last moment without knowing any thing in the world about it. And their beauty is so exquisite, that I was willing enough to trust to that for the effect. But it will be incomparatively more effective with a little instruction; and if they inherit your delicious talent in the melodramatic line, and have a little of your instruction beside, I am positive there will not be a dry eye in the house when the royal tyrant seizes on them."

During the short time that it took Mrs. Sherbourne to make all these little speeches, the following dialogue took place between Mr. Marchmont and his friend Marvel.

"What sort of stuff is it?" demanded the former.

"Execrable!" replied the latter.

"Then why the devil is it to be played?" said Marchmont.

"Why? Why because the Duke of Alonby makes a point of it," answered Marvel.



The Rehearsal

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“ Oh ! that’s it, is it ? Then it will run, I dare say,” rejoined the critic.

“ You must give us a helping hand, you know,” said the manager.

“ So be it—always remembering my friend, that—‘ Dans le siècle où nous sommes, on se donnent rien pour rien ’ ” returned his friend.

“ If we forget that moral lesson, you will remind us of it. Marchmont, we may trust you for that, may we not ? ” returned Marvel, laughing.

“ Yes, you may,” replied the other, in the same tone, “ and it is about the only species of trust that I could conscientiously recommend to you.”

“ Ladies and gentlemen, we have really no time to lose if this piece is to be rehearsed to-day,” said the manager, addressing the party assembled. “ I am ready to confess that I am not a gentleman at large, and at liberty to lounge about throughout a whole morning, even among so very charming a party as that at present assembled. I have a great deal of

business to do, whatever may be the case with others, and unless the rehearsal begins directly, I cannot be present at it."

As this was not spoken playfully, but, on the contrary, with every appearance of the speaker's being very particularly grave, all the theatrical ladies and gentlemen, without even excepting the angelic little Motherbys, were immediately on the alert; the majority falling back to be ready when wanted; while Mrs. Winterblossom and Mr. Periwinkle, who were to play the first scene, took their places in front.

"You had better take your party into the stage-box, Marchmont," said Mr. Marvel, indicating Mrs. Sherbourne and Chesterfield by a motion of his hand.

Poor Mrs. Sherbourne was in an agony. The idea of her belonging to any body's party on such an occasion, instead of every body belonging to hers, was terrible. There were in truth some very annoying symptoms in all that had met her eyes and ears since she entered.

For some particular reasons of his own, of no great public importance, Mr. Marvel was

proof against all that poor Mrs. Sherbourne could do, say, look, or sigh, with a view to enchanting him; and it is certain, that nothing save the influence of the Duke of Alonby, could have induced him to consent to the reception of her piece. But it is probable that the duke insisted neither upon his flirting with the lady, nor upon any particular etiquette in the manner of her personal reception, and accordingly he seemed not to think it necessary to treat her with any very marked distinction. To resent this in any way, was, however, impossible; and, notwithstanding her vexation, she was sufficiently true to herself to retain her charming smile as she took the arm of Mr. Marchmont, and suffered him to lead her, by a door communicating with the stage, into the box pointed out by the manager. Charles silently followed in their train.

It did not take above two minutes to make this transit from the stage to the stage-box; but by the time they were seated, they found Mrs. Winterblossom and Mr. Periwinkle going at full gallop through the first scene.

“ ‘ Remorseless fangs,’ ”

muttered Mrs. Winterblossom.

“ ‘ In vain you plead—
‘ Joys fit for Heaven,’ ”

mumbled Mr. Periwinkle.

“ What are they about ? ” demanded the irritated Mrs. Sherbourne, addressing herself to Mr. Marchmont. “ Do they call this rehearsing ? ”

“ Marvel is in a great hurry, you see,” returned the friendly critic, “ and it will be more for your interest I think not to interrupt them. They seem admirably perfect, you may perceive, by the rapidity with which the cue is always taken. That’s a great matter, a very great matter, I assure you.”

“ Perfect ! ” exclaimed the unhappy lady ; “ what good is it for me to be here ? How am I to judge of the effect ? How am I to give any opinion as to the manner in which the different performers sustain their parts ? This mummery is most cruel ! ”

“ Upon my word,” persisted Marchmont, “ I

would very strongly recommend you not to interrupt them. It will only put them out."

" 'Passion unconquered, and a will untamed,' " said Mr. Periwinkle, yawning.

"Gracious Heaven! May I not hear that speech? May I not be permitted to give an opinion on the meaning given by the performer to the equivocal words before it? This is too, too hard!" and the poor woman actually forgetting beauty and every thing belonging to it, burst into tears, though her recollection returning the minute after, she restrained the briny eye-inflaming shower, and only sobbed.

Charles was exceedingly touched, and ventured to say to Mr. Marchmont, "Would it not be better, sir, to stop them at once, and make them understand that Mrs. Sherbourne is very uneasy at not hearing the speeches given properly. It seems to me perfectly cruel to let them go mumbling on in this way."

"You may go round if you like it, Mr. Chesterfield, and tell them so; but as to its being better to do so, you must excuse me if I do not think it. On the contrary, I know that it would

only be running a tremendous risk of offending the whole set at once, manager and all. Trust me, you had better sit still."

"But what must you think of lines given in this way, Mr. Marchmont?" said the mortified and most unhappy poetess. "How can I hope for your support?"

"My dear madam! Let me intreat you not to permit any doubts and fears on that point to disturb your serenity. I should be totally unworthy the friendship, with which I flatter myself you intend to honour me, could my conduct be influenced in the slightest degree by such an accident. These good people happen to be in a prodigious hurry this morning, that is all; and you positively must not let it annoy you."

"You are very, very kind! But surely Mr. Marvel is using me very ill. He must let all this go on purposely to annoy and distress me."

"Not the least in the world, believe me. Marvel is the very best good fellow in the universe—only he is occasionally queer—as humorous as a child—but without another fault."

This assurance afforded but little consolation to Mrs. Sherbourne for her lamentable disappointment. It was, however, all she could get; and after suffering the purgatory of listening to half of some of her best speeches, and a quarter of others, gabbled through in the most excruciating manner, she at length heard what she knew to be the last words of the piece, and saw the last of the troop hurry off, leaving the dark, dismal stage a mournful type of her own feelings.

Mr. Marchmont rose and opened the box-door, but the unhappy Mrs. Sherbourne seemed unable to follow him, for resting her arms upon the front of the box, and her head upon her arms, she wept in good earnest, and without any sort of affectation whatever.

The philosophical Mr. Marchmont, probably thought it was better to give the lady time to recover herself, and took advantage of this unoccupied moment to say to Charles,

“All you want, my young friend, is practice, and a little more boldness in your views. Write

on by all means, and let me have every thing you write. You shall have the advantage of my pages as a means of bringing you to the light of day—a proof of real regard and goodwill, which I hope you will appreciate justly. That is right, my dear Mrs. Sherbourne! Look up again! You know how tapestry is made, and what effect is produced by showing the ends and knots of the work upon the side whereon the operator is employed. So is it with the getting up of a play—wait but till the piece is turned the right side outwards, and then all will perceive its glowing colours and beautiful design.”

Having uttered this flourish, he again offered his arm, which was tremblingly accepted, and followed by the thrice-happy Charles, who seemed to walk on air; they again found their way through the chaos from whence springs theatrical creation, and once more found themselves in the street.

“ Good Heavens! There is no carriage waiting!” exclaimed Mrs. Sherbourne; “ I do not

think I could walk to Mount-street, if my life depended upon it ! I feel as if I should literally sink into the earth."

"Can you tell me, Mr. Marchmont, in what direction I can find a stand of coaches ?" eagerly demanded Charles, and after receiving the necessary instructions, he darted off, and returned with the desired vehicle in a few minutes.

But short as was the interval, it was long enough for Mrs. Sherbourne to make an appointment with the gentleman in whose charge she was left, for an early visit on the following morning.

"I would not ask this of you," she said plaintively, "had I not a communication of some importance to make."

"Is an apology necessary?" accompanied by a slight pressure of her arm, was the eloquent and only answer, and not another word was uttered on the subject.

"I envy you the office, Chesterfield," said Mr. Marchmont, as Charles sprang out of the rattling hack ; "but I have business with a person who lives close by—and I must not miss

the opportunity ; so it is you, you very lucky fellow, who must take care of this lady to her lodgings.”

He then handed her in, pressed her hand with an intelligent look, that ratified his promise of waiting on her, gave Charles a friendly nod, and walked off—*quitte pour la peur* of having the coach to pay.

Prosperity is often said to harden the heart ; but there certainly are some persons upon whom it produces a different effect, or at any rate, there are some sorts of happiness which produce an expression of the heart which leads it to pour forth its kindly feelings upon all around. Had Charles just been meeting with a rebuff in his young authorship, he would have been very far from feeling the same tender movement of compassion which he now did towards Mrs. Sherbourne. But as it was, he with perfect sincerity, and most true sympathy felt all the contrast of their situations. She had been most painfully mortified ; he had been cheered and gratified, almost beyond his highest hopes. From his very soul he pitied her. Her delicate

little person seemed to shrink, and almost dissolve away, as with her large eyes still filled with tears, she threw herself into a corner of the carriage, and sighed as if her heart was positively in the very act of breaking, as the rumbling vehicle drove off.

It is unnecessary to enter into any detailed description of what passed during this drive. Mrs. Sherbourne professed to have studied the human heart, and it is likely enough that she had done so. Certain it is, that she read aright the pitying softness which tempered the voice, and spoke in the eyes of her young companion. It is certain, too, that she thought him altogether fascinating, and he thought her the same, as often chances to be the case between two persons; one knowing the world rather more than enough, and the other not knowing it at all, for each finds something new to study, and admire.

Nevertheless, her parting words to him were, "Dear friend, you must not come to me to-morrow! I will not see you again till I am more myself. My feelings have been harassed and

agitated to-day, more than is good for me. To-morrow must be a day of self-examination and repose. But the day after, Chesterfield, the day after, we will meet again !”

“ Must it be so ?” cried Charles, almost passionately ; “ I dare not disobey you ! But oh, Mrs. Sherbourne ! how wearily long will the hours seem till Sunday !”

CHAPTER IX.

A Short Chapter, which contains a few Important Facts.

FOR some reason or other our hero felt more inclined for solitary musings and a solitary breakfast on the following morning, than even for the gentle smiles of the beautiful Clara; and the breakfast table in Bruton-street was therefore surrounded only by the family trio. As soon as her tea and coffee duties were ended, Clara rose, and left the room, feeling absolutely incapable of containing the gossiping conversation any longer.

“That is just what I wanted her to do,” said Mrs. Longuéville, settling herself in her own

chair—"for I must positively speak to you about her. Do you not think she is looking wretchedly ill, George? I strongly suspect that something has occurred to vex her."

"Do you think so, Amelia? I declare I have not observed it," replied the baronet. "What is it makes you think so?"

"Look at her with a little more attention, brother, and the fact will hardly escape you. As you have not observed her looking ill, it follows, of course, that you have not, like me, been exercising your ingenuity to discover the cause of it. But I think it is time that you should observe both the one and the other. Your daughter is breaking her heart for Dalrymple, Sir George. I have no more doubt of this fact than of my existence."

"Nonsense, Amelia; I on my side have no doubt that they understand each other perfectly well. This whim of his, which has taken him off in the very middle of the London season, may, likely enough, be a vexation to her, and may make her look what you call ill; but I will bet what you like that it arises solely

from some lovers' quarrel. You know that she is as proud as Lucifer, and I dare say she has taken some miff, and sent him off in dudgeon."

"Did I believe you to be in funds, brother, to pay a bet without inconvenience, I should be ready to accept one on this point to any amount you please. There has been no question of love between them. None, none whatever. Of this I feel perfectly sure."

"That is to say, that he has not yet proposed to her. Of course I know that. A fortune like Dalrymple's rarely offers itself in secret. On such occasions papas are in nowise terrible. Nevertheless, Amelia, I am perfectly persuaded that they are lovers. Our shilling *écarté* sister, though played admirably well on both sides, is not so absorbing as to prevent me seeing what has been going on at the tea-table—and the result of my observations is, that Arthur and Clara are in love with each other. Trust me, I know a little what men are, and women too."

"And having made that profound discovery, Sir George, you think the rather more important matter of a marriage between them, per-

fectly sure and certain, do you? I am sorry to say that I am very essentially of a different opinion."

"I confess I find it difficult to conceive what should prevent it. If he likes her, and she likes him, what on earth should keep them asunder."

"Listen, and I will tell you. Mr. Dalrymple's jealous notions of propriety will prevent it. He does not approve the domestication of your protégé, Sir George—and he has left London in order to cure himself of an inclination which his stiff-necked judgment does not approve. He would die rather than yield to passion at the expense of judgment."

"Presuming all this to be true, will you do me the favour, Amelia, to tell me how you found it out? Has Arthur Dalrymple been making you his confidant?" said Sir George, somewhat sneeringly.

"I am not aware of the existence of any one less likely to indulge me in this way, than your accomplished ward," replied Mrs. Longuéville. "But on the other hand, I know no one to

whom such sort of confidence is less necessary than to myself. I should as soon think of asking my adversary at whist what trumps he had in his hand, as require such communications from persons respecting whose private affairs I am interested. I trust to my own acuteness, brother, for the discovery of both."

"And few persons, sister," replied Sir George, bowing with the air of a Lord Oglevie, "might with equal safety trust to their own sagacity in either. But to be very serious. What can Mr. Dalrymple have ever seen or heard from our reserved and generally haughty Clara, which could by possibility give rise to such a feeling as jealousy of our worthy rustic Charles Chesterfield? The idea appears to me utterly preposterous."

"Dalrymple is a man infinitely more likely to be influenced by what he fancies, than by what he sees, or, at any rate, by what others would see in his place," returned the acute Mrs. Longuéville. "Were it not so, he must have long ago been aware that the reserved and haughty Clara, as you call her, had surrendered her

heart to him, not only unconditionally but without being asked for it. However, I am far from regretting that on this point the young gentleman is somewhat less clear-sighted than myself. It is infinitely better that it should be so. Nevertheless, one of two courses must be pursued. We must either manœuvre so as to get Dalrymple back to town, pack off the village Apollo, to pipe amidst his native trees, and this very absurd obstacle removed, trust to the mutual liking which most assuredly exists, for the settling matters in the right way—or, give up the gentleman and his ten thousand a year as a forlorn hope, and endeavour to save the poor girl from a decline, by immediately changing the scene, and giving her something else to think of.”

“ I presume it is not necessary, Amelia, that I should dilate to you upon the sincerity of my inclination to promote this match,” said Sir George. Mrs. Longuéville bowed. “ Well then, let me state to you a fact, that you may find it more difficult to receive with faith. I have no intention whatever of following your

suggestion respecting young Chesterfield. Most assuredly, Amelia, I shall not return my rustic Apollo to his woods."

"Then you utterly discredit my assurance respecting the effect which his familiarity here has produced on Dalrymple?"

"I have such very perfect reliance on your habitual acuteness of observation, sister, that I can hardly say that; although, I confess, it appears to me most outrageously improbable, that, in this instance, you should be right. However, I confess to you, that this is not just now the most important question."

"What can you mean, Sir George Meddows?" demanded his sister, looking both surprised and alarmed.

"I will tell you," he said, drawing his chair close to her, speaking in a tone from which all lightness had vanished. "Mrs. Longuéville," he resumed, "you are the only person existing who really knows any thing of the actual state of my affairs—yet you are very far from knowing all. But, if you will give me a patient hearing for a few minutes, I will lay my precise

situation before you. That the subject is a very disagreeable one, is the only reason why I have not asked your attention to it before. That I am a ruined man, Amelia, I believe you pretty well know already. That is to say, you know that were I to die to-morrow, it would require but a very few days to prove that I died insolvent: but you do *not* know how desperately difficult it is for me to live on from day to day; you do not know that there is not a single source from whence I could hope to squeeze a few hundreds by way of a loan, that I have not drawn upon, and totally exhausted, and that nothing but my still very sanguine hope of getting Dalrymple for my son-in-law, has enabled me to breast the coming storm as I have done. Should this fail me!—But I will not, I am not, come to such a supposition as yet.”

“But gracious Heaven, brother! if such be your position, how is it possible that you can deliberately declare it to be your intention to risk this last hope, for the sake of persevering in a patronizing whim which, pardon me, it was

most exceedingly absurd ever to have conceived !”

“And do you really know me so very little, Mrs. Longuéville, as to fancy that I would have encumbered myself with this inspired lout without some prudential motive, strong enough for even yourself to approve? I have sometimes acted, I believe, like a fool, and oftener like a madman, but never surely like a passionate admirer of a young rustic’s verses, or the patron of such a profitless cub as Charles Chesterfield.”

“Do not torment me with riddles, brother !” said Mrs. Longuéville, knitting her brows, and speaking in a tone of vastly less softness than ordinary. “Tell me, in the name of common sense, and tell me at once, why you brought him, and why you persist in keeping him here? This is surely no moment for idle jesting.”

“It is not, Amelia ; and I will tell you all. In the first place, sister, I have already borrowed money of his father, and as I positively could not, without inconvenience, pay the interest due upon it when I saw the old man at the

Grange, I was well enough pleased to lay the whole race under an immeasurable obligation by bringing this lad up to town. But that is not all, Mrs. Longuéville," continued Sir George, occupying his eyes and hands in stirring the remnant of a cup of coffee ; " that is not all—and to say truth, I almost wonder that the acuteness of which you boast has not already led you to divine the rest." Here he paused, and looking rather furtively at his sister, he perceived that she too was employed, like himself, in playing with a tea-spoon and coffee-cup. There must have been something of intelligence in her downcast face, for he said, " I think you understand me now, Amelia. I think you guess why I invited this young legatee to come and improve his fortune in London. Am I not right ? Do you not divine the reason ?"

" And if I do," she replied, " I am as far as ever from conceiving how it is possible that any accommodation which you may hope from him, can be of sufficient importance to set against the remotest possibility of the arrangement being disapproved by Dalrymple. The

one ought not to be balanced in your mind against the other."

"Nor could it, Amelia," replied Sir George, gloomily, "were it not that things are still worse with me than you as yet imagine."

"I wish to God, brother, that you would tell me the whole at once. I have a right to your confidence in every way. It is not the first time you have bestowed it upon me, and I think you will say that I never abused it. It is moreover necessary for my own affairs that I should know the worst. If any thing like a crisis is approaching, it will be desirable for me immediately to return to France—and, in that case, if Clara will pay me the same sum she now pays you, I will agree to take her with me, and do the best I can for her, in Paris, till the storm is blown over. But it is essential that you should let me know all."

"Your consideration for me in this is great," replied the baronet, bitterly. "But it is very idle to shrink from hearing of an arrangement which is precisely what I should have most

approved; and which I trust, sister, will eventually take place should the storm come, and not blow over till it has made a wreck of me. We are not quite come to this, however, as yet."

"But you have not yet told me what is this worst that remains behind. Pray let me hear all," said Mrs. Longuéville, authoritatively.

"I have not the slightest inclination to conceal any thing," he replied. "On the contrary, I particularly wish that you should be acquainted with all the circumstances of my situation, in order, not only that if possible you should help me by your advice, but also that you may judge me fairly. The most terrible pressure at the present moment, Amelia, arises from the absolute necessity of my settling the trust account with Dalrymple. That is the substance. All other fears are shadows."

"Do you mean that you have spent his money, George?" said Mrs. Longuéville, suddenly turning pale.

“ Every sixpence of it,” answered the baronet with stoic calmness.

“ And you still fancy that he will marry your daughter ?” she said.

“ Not if he discovers the fact,” replied Sir George. “ For though I have every reason to believe him liberal, and even generous, in regard to money, I know him to have the most exaggerated notions respecting the necessity of exact accounts ; and I do not believe that the woman exists who could turn his sober head sufficiently to make him connect himself—in short, to make him forget or forgive any inaccuracy of the kind. On this point, Mrs. Longuéville, my opinion cannot be shaken.”

“ I agree with you,” was his sister’s succinct reply.

“ Then you perceive that no choice was left me between the utter destruction of all our hopes for poor dear Clara, and the submitting to avail myself of any means, however disagreeable, for getting out of this most horrible embarrassment ?”

“ And your plan is to borrow this silly young

poet's legacy, as soon as he gets into actual possession of it?"

"Exactly so," said Sir George.

"What if he fails you?"

"Then the game is up,—unless indeed, you would yourself assist me, Amelia?"

Mrs. Longuéville fixed her dark eyes upon him in silence for half a minute, and then answered with a smile,—“These last are the only words you have spoken in this conversation, Sir George, that have very greatly surprised me; but I own I do wonder at hearing you propose what you so perfectly well know is ridiculous.”

“Of course, of course—I know it, I do know it perfectly. But you too know what sort of aid a drowning man will catch at. There is one other way, to be sure. Clara herself might lend me her five thousand.”

“Lend it to you?” said Mrs. Longuéville interrogatively.

“True Amelia. It would be very like asking for the loan of a leg of mutton. Yet if it were the means of marrying her?”

“And if the money were lent, Mr. Dalrymple paid, and no marriage follow? What would Clara’s fate be then?”

“Then I should decidedly have managed vilely, both for myself and her. But young Chesterfield will lend me the money, I have not the slightest doubt of it, and a proud man he will be that day, take my word for it—so far I feel safe. But there is a difficulty in point of time, you will observe, and it is exactly on that point that I want your advice. Dalrymple’s claim upon me will come in July or August, we’ll say it the very latest, and young Chesterfield will not be of age till December. How in the world am I to get over the interval?”

“Of course you must contrive in some way or other to postpone the settling. So no more of your great mental resources, Sir George, this can be a matter of no great difficulty.”

“Well! we shall see. It would certainly be rather too hard upon me, sister, if having no ready money, I had no ready wit either.”

“You are playful this morning, Sir George,” said his sister rising.

“Do not be in a hurry, Amelia. Do not be impatient to see me in a humour to hang myself. Perhaps it will come of itself by and by.”

“And if it does, Sir George, I should consider both deeds to be equally childish. But tell me—merely as a matter of curiosity, will it be absolutely necessary to strip this unlucky boy bare. You surely cannot owe Mr. Dalrymple four thousand pounds?”

“I am afraid you are mistaken, Mrs. Longueville. But even if you were right, even if by borrowing this trifle, I were to find myself with a few pounds in my pocket; I would just ask you to whom would it be most necessary, to Charles Chesterfield, or to me? What are his wants, happy fellow! compared to mine? Just meat and drink, and a new suit once in two years—all of which his warm old father will be ready to give—and then just think of me!”

“Perfectly true, Sir George. I confess I

often think of the comparative wealth of that class, with much envy."

"And well you may! I am sure when they can help us, they ought to do it. But now I must be off, Amelia. I expect a fellow to meet me about a horse that I want to buy. Heigh ho! I have certainly eased my mind a little, by telling you all my troubles. But turn it in your head a little, that devilish problem I mean, about the difference of time. You will do me an essential service if you can hit upon some neat way of getting me out of that dilemma. I am sure you could help me if you would think about it."

"I am going to string some pearls for my hair to-night, and will meditate upon it with every bead I drop," said Mrs. Longuéville, moving towards the door, and looking as tranquil as if she had been enjoying the most agreeable conversation in the world.

"Thank you kind sister!" returned Sir George gaily kissing her hand. "What a comfort it is

to have a friend who so thoroughly understands me !”

“ And on my part, I can truly say that it is a comfort to have a brother who can appreciate my affection.”

And so they parted.

CHAPTER X.

A Business-like Interview between Mrs. Sherbourne and Mr. Marchmont—A solemn League and Covenant.

MR. MARCHMONT was very tolerably punctual to the appointment he had made with Mrs. Sherbourne on quitting the theatre; that is to say, he arrived at her lodgings not much more than two hours after the time named. Had her visiter been one of the many who were accustomed to call upon her, merely to enjoy the pleasure of her fascinating conversation, it is probable she would have received him rather coolly, having ordered herself to be denied to some half-dozen dear friends during

the interval that she was waiting for him. But very different were both her conduct and her feelings on the present occasion. That he should flirt with her faithfully and tenderly whenever they met, was but a secondary wish; that he should deal with her for a certain MS. which she had to dispose of was the first, and on this she was so intent that she was perfectly capable of forgiving his coming late, provided only that he came at last.

“I hardly know,” she said, after the first affectionate greeting was over, “I hardly know whether I am most delighted or most ashamed to see you here! My heart fails me when I think how many things you may have been obliged to neglect, in order to come to me!”

“No, no, I never neglect any thing, my charming Mrs. Sherbourne. Postponement is not neglect, you know. Show me the man who would not postpone the affairs of half-a-score of the male creation, for the luxury of listening to words uttered by such lips and eyes as those before me,—show me such a one, and I will tell him frankly that he is not worthy

to live. Thank Heaven! I am not so constituted."

"Still that flattering voice!" said Mrs. Sherbourne, with a sort of plaintive playfulness. "Alas! It is business—harsh, hateful, inexorable business that we must discuss to-day." Mr. Marchmont was decidedly a man of gallantry, and nowise unconscious of, or insensible to, his power over the female mind; but he knew also what was due to his station as editor and part proprietor of *The Regenerator*, and would not easily have forgiven himself had he suffered a flirtation with any woman breathing to make him unmindful of his interest. "You are right, dear madam," said he, suddenly permitting himself to sink down into a middle-aged man of business. "I shall be happy to hear what you have got to propose to me. It is my duty as well as my inclination to listen to you with the utmost attention."

"I am sadly unqualified for the task, Mr. Marchmont," she replied, "but nevertheless must screw my courage to it, for alas! it is necessary. I tremble to name it even, but there is a work that I wish to dispose of."

“I presume, Mrs. Sherbourne that it is either a tale, or a series of tales, or novelettes, which you are about to propose to me?” said Marchmont, as if rather eager to bring her to the point at once:

“No, sir—not so,” she replied. “I flatter myself that I have something to propose considerably more worthy your attention. My life, Mr. Marchmont, has been a very remarkable one. Born on the bosom of the Adriatic, in a steam-boat, bound to Ancona, the first breath I drew was impregnated with poetry and love. I will not ask you to follow me now through every shining accident by flood and field which marked my first days of existence, nor yet will I give you even a glance of the mazy labyrinth of youthful passion through which it was my lot to wind my tangled doubtful way, at an age when girls less set apart and marked by fate are still playing with their waxen babies in the nursery. But all this is faithfully recorded, Mr. Marchmont, and with a naïve sincerity of truth, of which Jean Jacques Rousseau alone, besides myself, has ever set an example. It is for this I wish to find a purchaser.”

“You have been perfectly right, my dear madam, perfectly right,” cried Mr. Marchmont, betrayed into greater approbation than it was at all editorial to express, “no other system of auto-biography can by possibility be worth attention. But I beg your pardon. Let me not interrupt you. You were going on. What further particulars were you about to mention?”

“Nay, you do well to speak to me!” said Mrs. Sherbourne, clasping her hands; “call it not interruption, your words fell upon my spirit like the favouring breeze that wafts the frail overladen vessel to its port! O Mr. Marchmont! you little guess what it is for one so utterly unfit to breast the storms of life as I am, to offer my second soul, as I may call it, for sale! To carry my sorrows and my joys to market! To ask, to urge—even such a noble mind as yours, to give me gold for turning traitor to my own precious thoughts, and laying bare my heart of hearts to all men!” Here she stopped, and covering her face with her hands, gave her admiring auditor every reason to sup-

pose that she was suffering from very vehement agitation. The critic was by no means displeased by this description of the wares she offered, and really wished the fair sufferer to proceed in her *catalogue raisonné* of the subjects of her work ; but could find nothing more original to say by way of tranquilizing her spirits than the somewhat hackneyed phrase—"Compose yourself !"

"Compose myself !" she repeated meekly, and withdrawing her hands from her face, "You bid me compose myself, Mr. Marchmont, and with my hand on the sacred pages which I am about to violate, in order to sustain existence !" And here she spread her little hand upon a large thick volume which lay upon the table, and fixing her appealing eyes on her companion, shook her head, and her curls most touchingly.

"This is the work then, is it ?" said Mr. Marchmont, stretching out his hand rather eagerly to seize upon it.

"Yes ! that is it," she replied. "That is the record of every thought and of every deed for the

last fifteen years. But being such, you cannot, of course, my dear sir, for a single moment suppose that I would let it meet the eye of day till I am cold in earth?" and so saying, she too stretched forth her hand, and again laying it upon the precious manuscript, retained it in its place.

"But, my dear Mrs. Sherbourne!" exclaimed Mr. Marchmont, laughing, as it seemed, very heartily, "you are not going at your age to propose to me the purchase of a work which is not to be published till after your death? Could you at this moment see your own fair face, and youthful person, you would perceive as I do the—the—pardon me! the absurdity of the notion." And again he laughed aloud.

Mrs. Sherbourne fixed her eyes upon him with that sad heavy melancholy look which is produced by dropping the head and raising the eyes at the same time; and sighing profoundly, once again shook that fair head and all its ringlets with an action as melancholy as that of Hamlet's father's ghost.

"What is it you mean, charming Mrs. Sher-

bourne?" said Marchmont, looking very much as if he were inclined to laugh again.

"May I trust you?" she said, in a tone of deep solemnity. "May I?"

"Assuredly you may. Can you doubt it?"

"I may not, must not doubt it" she replied. "It is not my life that hangs upon my trust in you, but it is something infinitely dearer still—it is my honour."

Perhaps this might not have been the first time that words very like these had been addressed to Mr. Marchmont, and under ordinary circumstances he would have been extremely well able to understand what they meant; but at this moment, unless they were uttered prospectively, or prophetically, he could not understand them at all, and his looks probably expressed this, for Mrs. Sherbourne presently added, "Oh! you do not comprehend me! Alas! alas! you guess not what I mean!"

"I am afraid you are right, my dear Mrs. Sherbourne. I really cannot make you out at all this morning," he replied, with perhaps

some little indication of being weary of the mystification, and wishing to have it brought to a conclusion as soon as convenient.

“ I will explain myself, Mr. Marchmont, have patience with me ! It is a very awful moment ! But I *will* rouse my sinking courage, and explain myself fully.” She paused for a moment, passed her hand once or twice slowly across her forehead, closed her eyes, as if to throw their light inward for the purpose of setting things a little to rights in her distracted mind, and then heaving another long-drawn sigh, resumed :

“ I grieve to own it, Mr. Marchmont, for I believe in the estimation of many well-meaning persons, it is considered as disgraceful, but I am in debt beyond any probable means of payment, unless I immediately avail myself of all the resources I can command for raising money, and at the same time place myself in a position which shall render it impossible for me to spend any more. Such is the task before me.”

Mr. Marchmont looked grave, and inclined his head, as if in acquiescence, but said nothing.

“My play may, or may not succeed,” she continued, “but in neither case will it affect my present determination. It is to these Memoirs that I look for the means of extricating myself from a pressure that I feel to be intolerable. Will you, before I explain myself further, permit me to point out to you one or two passages in these pages which will, I think, eventually be found to render them of considerable value in a commercial point of view?”

“I am entirely at your service for the next hour, Mrs. Sherbourne,” replied the Regenerator, in a very business-like tone.

“I thank you, sir. That time will, I think, fully suffice, as my task will not be long; were it so, I must sink ere it were fully done!”

She then took the heavy volume on her knee, and began to turn over its closely written pages. “Few of your profession, or mine either, Mr. Marchmont,” she resumed, with a melancholy smile, “are ignorant of the fact that biting personal anecdotes are the most marketable of all literary commodities; and when they are skil-

fully given, with just enough of concealment to produce the effect of mystery, and yet with sufficient clearness not quite to elude the curiosity they provoke, the demand is, I believe, as certain as that for green peas during the last days of May, or for partridges during the month of September."

"You are quite right, Mrs. Sherbourne. It is the only literary speculation I know of that is absolutely without risk. Scorn and scoffing on certain subjects will sometimes run, but occasionally there is a check to this. Impassioned writing also, when it is thrown off in a style sufficiently unrestrained, will often prove extremely saleable. But this altogether depends upon the critical notices. If nobody can be found sufficiently obliging to sing out that such a work is too improper to read, the chances are greatly in favour of its proving a dead loss. But sharp personalities will cut their own way to notice pretty generally without fail, and are, as you justly observe, by far the best business we have. May I hope that you have something of this kind to offer me?"

“You shall yourself be the judge,” replied Mrs. Sherbourne, complacently; and opening the volume at a page where there were many initials, and many asterisks, she turned it to him, saying, “Read that and the two or three following pages, my dear sir, and tell me if you think it possible that any one can miss the interpretation?” Mr. Marchmont eagerly drew the book towards him, and set himself to the perusal of it very attentively; Mrs. Sherbourne keenly watching him the while, as a believing alchymist of yore might have watched the working together of some of the impure materials, from the mixture of which he hoped to produce gold. When he had reached the limit prescribed, however, Mrs. Sherbourne, with a sort of gentle violence, seized upon the volume and withdrew it from his hands. “That is enough, quite enough,” she said, “to enable you to form an opinion as to the aim I have taken, and the hardness of the hits I can give. Do you think, Mr. Marchmont, that any one can blunder as to the persons alluded to? Are my sketches in danger of being mistaken?”

“Certainly not,” he replied, with an air of great interest, but with rather a nervous and frightened expression of countenance.

“And I have not splashed my heros and heroines with milk and water, or pelted them with feathers, have I?”

“Upon my soul, madam, you have not. The danger is of another kind. I don’t feel quite sure that we might not get into a scrape about damages. Are you quite sure that there is not something like a libel there?”

“There is not the least danger in the world, I do assure you. If you will observe, there are one or two mystifications mixed up with the statements, which might most satisfactorily be pleaded to prove non-identity, that delightful *alibi* for scandal-mongers, or, more properly speaking, for moral satirists. What jury will dare to declare that A—n—y must mean Alonby, or B—t—n, Betroon? especially if A—n—y is described as having but one brother, when the Alonby attacked has two; and B—t—n stated to be forty, when it is notorious that she is not more than thirty-three? No! Trust me, that

throughout the whole there is not a single person that can be mistaken, nor a single allusion proved."

"Decidedly that is the secret for the preparation of the desired article," said Marchmont, laughing, "there is no denying it. For myself, I confess to you that I long ago determined to have nothing to do with that species of writing which attacks crimes instead of men, and classes instead of individuals. Such impersonal attacks are worth exceedingly little in my estimation, and, instead of satires, are but a trifle better than sermons; for, of course, when a hundred different originals may be pointed out, it is perfectly evident that the portrait can have none of the animating interest which belongs to the likeness of an individual. Such generalisation may be vastly moral, but it is altogether out of my way."

"My view of the thing is exactly the same as yours, Mr. Marchmont," eagerly replied Mrs. Sherbourne; "I would no more waste the biting cleverness of my pen upon attacking any of the prevailing sins of mankind, without aiming the

lash against an individual, than I would send a letter by the post without putting an address upon it. It is a sort of Quixotic windmill-fighting which is totally out of my line. It suits me infinitely better to take my stand in a well-victualled, touch-me-not sort of a castle, where I can take aim through a loop-hole. Were I to trust my whole manuscript to you, Mr. Marchmont, you would perceive that those are my tactics; and that in becoming the purchaser of it, you would have nothing to fear from my having substituted heavy homilies against sin, in the place of piquante pasquinades against sinners."

"This description, it must be confessed, is exceedingly inviting, my dear lady," replied Marchmont, evidently interested by the account she had thus given of herself and her works; "but that terrible clause, which you have declared to be absolute, respecting the non-appearance of these Memoirs till after your death; you must be aware that at your age this condition must reduce the saleable value of the work to less than a tenth of what I might be tempted

to give, were I privileged to put the first part of it into *The Regenerator* of next month."

"Next month!" repeated Mrs. Sherbourne, with something like a shudder, while her countenance suddenly losing its gay and animated expression, assumed an aspect of the deepest melancholy. "Next month!—Ah! That is sudden."

"Nay, it would suit me very nearly as well if I could have it by the month after. But that is very different, you know, from putting it off till after your death."

Mrs. Sherbourne sighed heavily, and once more shook her head. "Alas!" she murmured, "You know not what you say! Before another month shall have began, and ended its course, Mr. Marchmont, this little earthly tabernacle of a soul too mighty for it, will lay down to rest in its early grave for ever, and for ever!"

"What in God's name can you mean, my dear Mrs. Sherbourne?" said her companion, staring at her; "You really appear to me to be as likely to live as I am."

"Nature may, perhaps, be of the same opi-

nion ; for truly she is at work within me, as if she had no notion of the event which fate sits smiling at. Will you deny, sir, that will—ay, woman's will—may be stronger than nature ?”

“ My dear madam, what *do* you mean ? You cannot surely intend to destroy yourself ?” said Mr. Marchmont, really looking a little terrified without any acting at all.

“ Why not ?” returned Mrs. Sherbourne, in the calm, quiet voice of philosophy. “ Why not, my good sir ! Tell me why not ?”

“ Is it possible that you have so horrible an idea in your head ?—But, no, it is impossible ! You are not in earnest, Mrs. Sherbourne.”

“ In my head, in my heart, in my very soul, and in that soul's master, my indomitable will !” replied Mrs. Sherbourne, with very sublime solemnity. “ Marchmont, you know me not ! Never, so help me, my good wit, and the next druggist's shop,—never will I live a coward in my own esteem, when death appears to me a better boon than life ; No, Marchmont, not for an hour !”

“ The thought is a sublime one, my charming

friend, and were you other than what you are, I could not choose but admire it. But in your case, dear lovely Mrs. Sherbourne, the idea is not to be borne. For Heaven's sake, why should you kill yourself? Why should so terrible an idea find place in your bosom?"

"Simply, good friend, because I am weary of life. I have roamed from clime to clime, and—wherefore should I make a secret of it, when it is all written here, (laying her hand upon her manuscript,) from passion to passion—from peace to turmoil—and from joy to woe. I have tried all things, Marchmont, and all things that I have touched upon have returned an empty hollow sound, sadly unlike the music that I sought."

"What can I say to you, my dearest Mrs. Sherbourne?" he replied, as if in truth very sincerely puzzled as to what it was fitting to do or say next, and at the same time casting a purchaser's glance at the manuscript.

"Tell me what you will give for my manuscript, Mr. Marchmont; it is all I ask of you," she replied.

“I give you my honour, madam, that I never found myself so utterly at a loss as to what I ought to say in answer to a question bearing the appearance of being so very direct and straightforward, and yet involving difficulties innumerable! It is inexpressibly painful, Mrs. Sherbourne, I might truly, and without the slightest exaggeration, say it is agonizing to me to reply to you in the manner that truth dictates; yet how can I avoid it, when the demand is made in a manner so perfectly professional and direct?”

“You cannot avoid it, Mr. Marchmont,” returned the lady, “without forfeiting for ever the esteem of every human being possessing courage enough to speak the truth, and honesty enough to act according to its divine dictates. Why, when an unhappy woman, driven by the most piercing agony of mind, opens to you her whole heart; why should you, merely because you discover thereby the plan by which she has determined to escape from it, why should you treat her with less generosity than you would have done had her sorrows still remained unknown? Is this well, Marchmont? Is it manly?”

Is it liberal? Had I, after having shown you the sample of my manuscript which you have seen, asked you to purchase it, and had you at the same time been privately assured by a physician that I could not live, you would not thus have shrunk from answering the question I have asked you. Yet you will hardly deny, Marchmont, that if I engage to continue this Memoir of my life down to the very last moment of my vaning existence; if I narrate, with all the power of language of which I am capable, and all the strength of feeling such moments must of necessity excite, the emotions of my soul as the deadly drug is doing its work; if I do this, Mr. Marchmont, you will hardly deny that the saleable value of the work will be increased thereby. Can you deny this, sir?"

The truth of this was so overpoweringly apparent to the Regenerator, that he gave way; his struggles suddenly ceased, and with that bluntness which, with persons at a certain level of principle, is often put on as a mask to hide their real features, he exclaimed, "It is almost cruel of you, Mrs. Sherbourne, to make me

hate my own honesty; but for the life of me, I cannot tell a lie, when a question is put to me so directly. Yes, it is quite true, madam, and I grieve from my soul to say it—it is quite true that I would give a higher price for a work so brought to a conclusion, than for the same work finished under other circumstances.” And having thus spoken, Mr. Marchmont sat very gloomily looking upon the carpet, with his brows knit, and his arms folded, as if he was very unhappy indeed.

“With my last breath shall my spirit bless you, Marchmont!” said Mrs. Sherbourne, in reply. “You have proved yourself to be the noble being I have heretofore been taught to think you. It is now proper that I should let you know that I have already settled every thing. Of course you pledge me your most sacred word that all which now passes between us is under the most solemn seal of secrecy.”

“Of course,” replied Mr. Marchmont gloomily.

“Then of course, my dear, my best, my latest friend, I can have no further reserve with you—

nor you with me. **THE EVENT** is fixed, immutably fixed, Marchmont, to take place on the 27th of September. Reasons, which you will understand when you come to read my manuscript, have led me to fix that day. O Heavens ! It will be the happiest I have known for years ! No day will pass, till its arrival, Marchmont, without my adding something to this chequered record. Oh ! it is a mosaic, made up of all the lights and shades of my much rainbowed life ! There is gloom herein, black as the dimmest smoke of hell, my friend ; but there are tints too, bright as the glowing glory of a seraph's wing, where sunbeams blend with dew !”

There was something in the cadence of this speech so exceedingly touching, that Mr. Marchmont was actually obliged to cover his face with both his hands, in order to conceal his emotion. It must, indeed, have been a very hard heart that could have remained untouched by it.

“ Now then, to conclude this trying interview,” she resumed in accents more prosaic, “ Now then, tell me, Mr. Marchmont, what sum you will be willing to give me immediately

by cheque, *on account*—and tell me also for what additional sum you will engage to account to any friend I may appoint to receive it when all is over.”

The internal calculations which took place in the mind of the Regenerator before he could answer this question were of a homely accurate kind, which would fall but uncouthly on the mind of a reader after perusing the foregoing truly touching scene. Neither can the answer which he ultimately gave be fairly considered as matter of legitimate history. Suffice it, therefore, to say, that a cheque was given, and that the parties separated, naturally satisfied by the result of their very interesting interview.*

* This scene has been sketched after the model of one said to have recently taken place in Paris.

CHAPTER XI.

Rapid Progression of the Hero in many ways—The snares of Love encompass him, and, though he struggles a little, there is every appearance of his being led away captive—Miss Meddows becomes exceedingly miserable—Sir George Meddows falls sick—Mrs. Sherbourne displays great ability.

FROM this period, the metropolitan progress of Charles Chesterfield went on at a very rapid rate. The great facility with which his loquacious pen could run over page after page, either in prose or rhyme, made him an invaluable acquisition to Mr. Marchmont, whose own turgid expositions of fantastical theories were not produced without more labour than he liked to give; and his literary ambition was

already satisfied, by having acquired the reputation of the most fearless setter-forth of religious, moral, and political heresies in Europe. In truth, he rejoiced exceedingly at an opportunity of resting upon his oars ; the having met with a young man equally able and willing to fill his pages for him, in whatever tone he might choose to dictate, with a degree of freshness and vivacity, too, that really gave interest to the articles he produced, and in a situation which did not render starvation inevitable upon his not being paid, was a piece of very important good fortune to the Regenerator. The more he felt this, the more he condescended to raise the rustic penman to the proud level of his personal intimacy. As to all the social delights, indeed, which literary men are sometimes supposed particularly to enjoy, Mr. Marchmont was not in the habit of supping or of dining either where he was *eaten*, but solely where he *ate* ; and it was therefore not at his own dwelling, but at the houses of his friends, and his friends' friends, that the critic introduced young Chesterfield to those convivial boards of London,

where the well-known pleasant banter is carried on between those who give the feast and those who accept it,—where turbot is repaid by talk, —champagne settled for by a draught (not a cheque) on wit,—a sprinkling of satire honestly tendered in exchange for spicy and piquant sprinklings of lesser pungency, but perhaps of equal value; and where philosophy, science, the *belles lettres*, and, occasionally, all the most recondite secrets of government, are freely offered, *à discrétion*, in return for the fricandeaux, vol-au-vents, blangnettes, and rotis, which constitute the *matériel* of a London literary-dinner party. This species of progress once began, goes on easily enough, and with a sort of steady crescendo movement, which speedily gives to the once elected show member of every intellectual coterie, a privileged *entrée* to the mansions of all the amphibious belonging to it. For, whether a newly-accepted genius be agreeable or not, it is obviously the interest of all who have once fed him, to persuade their friends and acquaintance that no tion, when feeding, ever roared so like a night-

ingale as their lion; which report, once well circulated, places the feeders, as well as the fed, in a very enviable position, and, moreover, prevents all danger of their being left to perform the delightful but costly office alone.

In this manner it happened, in what appeared to himself to be an incredibly short space of time, that Charles Chesterfield found himself invited out to dinner two or three times every week, and entreated to show himself at more evening parties than days and hours gave him time for. In a word, Charles Chesterfield was the fashion, and became,

“If not quite the first, in the very first line.”

Thus was he, as if by the hand of a magician, at once placed on what appeared to him the very highest pinnacle of human fame and of human happiness; and it was not very extraordinary if his head failed him, and he turned giddy. One or two circumstances, also, not necessarily or usually connected with the ordinary routine of a handsome young scribbler, suddenly pushed forward into popularity, contri-

buted to render this species of vertigo pretty nearly inevitable in the case of poor Charles. One of these arose out of the confidential conversation which has been recorded, as having taken place between Sir George Meddows and his sister. Till this occurred, Mrs. Longuéville had no idea of what vital importance the young man's remaining with them for a few months longer really was ; but from the moment she comprehended this, her manner towards him was completely changed, which he, poor lad, his brain having no place left in it for any idea unconnected with his literary success, attributed to the irresistible influence of his growing fame. Unfortunately, too, there appeared at the same time a change in the manners of Clara, which, seen through the prism of his vanity, appeared to him tinted with the same glorious hues as every thing else around him, and appeared to be, like all the rest, an offering to his genius and his fame.

Poor Clara was indeed an altered being. Persuaded that her own strength of mind would protect her from what she deemed the despic-

able destiny of loving, while unbeloved, she had permitted her preference of Dalrymple's society to grow upon her till every thing else in the world had become "flat, stale, and unprofitable;" and when she lost it, at a moment, too, when it seemed assured to her for some months at least, the pang was too sharp to permit her deceiving herself longer; and at the very moment when she discovered beyond the possibility of doubt that he cared not for her, she discovered also that she had given her whole heart to him. Such a conviction as this might well tame whatever looked like haughtiness in a character like hers, and, in truth, such a feeling of hopeless dejection took possession of her, as effectually dimmed the eagle brightness of her eye, and changed the lofty bearing which might have well become Diana, into the drooping languor of her least-favoured nymph. Yet, despite her secret and self-centred sorrows, Clara's keen faculties were not so blunted as to prevent her noticing the remarkable change in her aunt's manners towards young Chesterfield, and this, joined to a very perceptible increase of

civility and observance on the part of her father, also renewed all her first suspicions as to the motive which had led to his being brought to London. It was with a fearful shudder that she once more yielded to the conviction of her father's base intentions towards him; and it was with a firmness of purpose less likely to be shaken than that by which she had hoped to guard her own tranquillity from the misery of unrequited affection, that she resolved to guard the unsuspecting young man from the danger which threatened him from fraud and villany, that it almost killed her to think of.

It appeared to her that the most effectual mode of doing this would be by leading him into such a degree of confidential intimacy as would induce him to communicate to her whatever proposals might be made to him respecting his little fortune, when it came into his hands, either by her father, or any one else. With this view she encouraged him to converse freely with her on all subjects, invited him to repeat his visits to her little study, and, in a word, prepared herself to watch over his

safety, with an intensity of interest exactly proportioned to the horror which the idea of its being endangered by her father occasioned her.

Charles Chesterfield was not quite such a coxcomb as to think Miss Meddows was positively in love with him, but most assuredly he believed that his talents and growing celebrity had produced the distinguished regard she showed him; and it is exceedingly probable that our besotted hero might have been beguiled into dreaming not only that he was himself violently in love with her, but also that it was possible she might be won to love him in return, had not all his meditations, having this tendency, been very forcibly drove to another quarter.

The information respecting the young man's future prospects and present independence, which Miss Almeria Gibson had obtained from Miss Meddows, had been faithfully conveyed to Mrs. Sherbourne by some of her friends in the Gibson family; and the consequence was, that many of those hours which ought, according to agreement, to have been given to the

melancholy but sublime occupation of drawing her memoirs towards the awful conclusion which she had promised Mr. Marchmont, were employed in the most unremitting endeavours so completely to turn poor Charles Chesterfield's head, as to make him commit the solemn absurdity of marrying her. The probable success of these endeavours appeared to vary from day to day; for sometimes it was evident that the young man's thoughts, even when seated close beside her, would dare to wander somewhere or other where she was not; while at other times, it was at least equally easy to perceive, that her charms, and the manner in which she brought them in array against him, were more than his heart could stand; that resistance on his part was daily becoming more hopeless, and that, if nothing unexpectedly hostile to her views occurred to prevent it, she had a very good chance, by the time he was twenty-one, of being led to the feet of his venerable parents as a fair young bride, and their beautiful and dutiful daughter-in-law.

Thus passed the months of May and June,

with no variation as to the ultimate objects pursued by the various persons of our drama, and with very little remissness as to the efforts made to obtain them, so that all things went on steadily towards their success.

Mrs. Sherbourne's play was actually acted, and actually damned; but she bore it with a patient firmness, which Mr. Marchmont attributed to her approaching dissolution, and she herself to her approaching marriage, while the rest of the world greatly admired her calm philosophy.

Mrs. Gibson continued to buy, beg, borrow, and steal every engraving, etching, lithograph, drawing, and daub, that she could lay her hands upon, in order to swell the mass under which her buried Milton groaned. Mr. Gibson went on admiring his wife and daughters more and more every day he lived.

Mr. Marchmont ceased not to laud and patronize the young author; and in the course of about ten weeks collected from him a heterogeneous mass of moonshine meditations, sufficient to supply all gaps that might occur in

The Regenerator for a twelvemonth to come—but without, as yet, having hinted at any payment.

Charles himself continued, he really knew not very well how, or why, to make tenderer and tenderer love to Mrs. Sherbourne; and any skilful sporting man, who had watched it all, might have been tempted to make an even bet, that whenever Mrs. Sherbourne could find a good opportunity of making him a direct offer of marriage, he would accept it. But somehow or other the poor lad, notwithstanding all his triumphs, and the extreme happiness of which he often boasted to Clara, had either no courage, or no time, to write any more letters to Bessy. From all further correspondence with Mr. Westbrook he abstained upon principle, having an affronted sort of consciousness that the old gentleman was disposed rather to laugh at him than admire his productions, or rejoice in their success. All his correspondence with his home, therefore, was carried by letters to and from his mother, she being in fact the only member of his family who en-

tirely approved his present situation, or admired the printed results of it, which, notwithstanding, were regularly sent off per coach the very day they appeared in London.

Sir George and his sister, meanwhile, continued on terms of the most affectionate confidence, having frequent *tête-à-tête* conferences, and even mutually coming to the same conclusion, that whatever circumstances rendered it expedient to do, that must of course be done, and that nothing but the most pitiable weakness, and ignorance of the world, could for a moment lead any one to doubt or hesitate about it for an instant.

Yet, notwithstanding all this "excellent sympathy" between them, each had a sort of invisible by-play, a quiet little *dessous les cartes* of their own. Sir George did not think it either necessary or advisable to harass the delicate nerves of his sister, by communicating to her the rather desperate efforts he was making to redeem his ruined fortunes by play; nor did she feel herself by any means called upon to mention to him the very earnest watch-

fulness with which she studied the state of his temper, and every other index by which she might calculate the precise distance of the ruin which she knew must come, in order to regulate her own retreat from the falling fabric in the best manner possible,—that is to say, in order that she might ascertain the moment at which she could resume her former mode of life in showy apartments, *au troisième*, at Paris, with the best chance of losing no pleasure, and of sharing no pain, which her residence with her beloved brother afforded.

Poor Clara, too, was an anxious and watchful looker-on, though by no means so acute a one as her aunt. With tingling cheeks and a beating heart, she observed, however, that her unworthy father's paltry little devices for obtaining current cash recurred more frequently than ever, and often were put in practice with so bold a defiance of every thing like delicacy, that she came to the same conclusion as Mrs. Longuéville, as to believing that, despite his frequent laughter and irregular fits of high spirits, he was more involved than he was at all

likely to avow ; but she was still far from suspecting, as her wiser aunt did, that the catastrophe which must disclose all was fast approaching. Perhaps after all, her most anxious thoughts respecting pecuniary matters related to her fears respecting her father's motives for the rapidly increasing professions of his affection towards Charles ; and the only decided resolution which she took as to her own conduct under the painful position in which she found herself, was that of preventing the young man's legacy being borrowed, which she felt but too sure would be attempted as soon as he should be in possession of it—a period now very rapidly approaching.

As to Dalrymple, every thing like hope of his returning to town before the end of the London season had vanished from her mind. For the first fortnight after his departure, Sir George seemed determined to believe that he was coming back again ; but from that period he had ceased to name him. A dreadful source of new anxiety was, however, ere long added to all her other sufferings. This arose from a

casual remark made by a gentleman who had dined with them, on the near approach of Mr. Dalrymple's second majority. "You give up your guardianship of Dalrymple next month, Sir George, don't you?" said he, carelessly.

Accidentally, rather than from design, Clara's eyes followed those of the person who asked this question, and fixed themselves on her father's face. She saw his colour change; he became suddenly pale, and though evidently making a strong effort to rally, he suffered many seconds to elapse before he found voice to say,

"Yes, I think so."

Whether any one else noticed the effect produced by this question, she had no means of judging. Mrs. Longuéville was engaged in carefully preparing for herself a plate of early strawberries. Charles was doing the same thing for her; and the only other person present either was, or appeared to be, perfectly unobservant of the tone in which his question had been answered. But she wanted not any other commentary. Her own was terribly suf-

ficient to convince her that Arthur Dalrymple's coming of age was an event, the near approach of which made her father tremble. For this there could be but one reason, and that reason, that only, that real reason, at once occurred to her with a certainty that could hardly have been increased had she heard her father himself avow it. Upon the accession of misery which this brought it is not necessary to dwell.

In general, Clara was scrupulously polite towards her aunt, and scrupulously observant of her convenience; but now she forgot every thing save the necessity of being alone, and, suddenly rising, she had reached the door before Mrs. Longuéville had laid aside her knife and fork. Determined to avenge herself by a severe lecture in private for this very extraordinary want of attention, the offended aunt followed her niece to the door, and gave so stern a look as she passed her, that could the poor girl have noticed any thing, she might have repented her precipitation. But had Jupiter knit his brows at her at that moment,

she would not have heeded it. Instead of following Mrs. Longuéville to the drawing-room, she mounted in darkness to her own chamber, and there tortured herself by the most accurate anticipation of all that would and must follow upon the approaching settlement of accounts, if her father had made away with the money for which he was accountable to his ward.

Eternal estrangement, and such a degree of contempt and anger as must stamp her name and race on his memory as for ever coupled with disgrace, were inevitable. Long did her poor aching head, laid, but not resting, on her pillow, painfully meditate upon this woeful theme, till at length she came to the determination of sacrificing a part, or, if necessary, the whole of her own little fortune, to make good this justly-suspected deficiency before it became known to Dalrymple. This resolution might have brought something like comparative ease to her mind, had it not been for the great difficulty of putting it in practice. Never, upon any occasion, had her father breathed to her the slightest hint as to the existence of any

embarrassment in his affairs; and she must therefore, before she could assist him under the crisis he so evidently dreaded, lead him to speak with some degree of openness upon a theme which it appeared to be the first object of his domestic tactics to avoid.

But her purpose was not of a kind to be stopped by any obstacle which could be removed by a steadfast will; and she rose from her bed, groped her way in the dark to her washing-stand, bathed her eyes in cold water, and having descended the stairs and ascertained by a moment's pause at the drawing-room door that the gentlemen were there, and that consequently there was no immediate danger of a *tête-à-tête* with her aunt, she entered the room with that species of composure which results from having formed a resolution too steadfast to be shaken.

She would rather have avoided her father's eye, but this was impossible, for he gaily pronounced her name as she entered, saying, "Ah, Clara! I was just thinking that when we get that run-away Arthur back, we will have our

long-projected water-party to Richmond. It is a shame to have had Chesterfield here for nearly three months without showing him *notre belle rivière*. Dalrymple *must* come back to settle with me, and luckily his birthday falls so early in July, that we shall still be able to get together a good *singable* set." Here Sir George sneezed violently three or four times, but when the fit was over, he resumed: "I shall write to my dear capricious ward to-morrow, and let him know that I am ready, chapter and verse, house and chattels, pounds, shillings, and pence, for the great settling of accounts between us, for his minority of—how long is it? A year and a day, or some such thing. Here Sir George coughed a little; but, notwithstanding these symptoms of a violent and troublesome cold, he continued throughout the whole evening in excellent spirits, and was so gay and talkative at a rubber of whist which followed the departure of the tea-urn, that his sister was positively obliged to scold, in order to make him attend properly to the game. Yet all the time it was evident that he was seized with

an exceedingly violent attack of cough and cold.

Clara was completely puzzled. It seemed to her utterly impossible that if the violent change of countenance she had remarked had arisen from the cause she suspected, he could speak thus lightly of Dalrymple's immediate return. Still more was she persuaded that she had mistaken, when at breakfast the following morning though still suffering from very violent symptoms of cold, he put into her hands an open letter, saying—"Read that, Clara, and then seal, and send it to the post for me. But tell me first, if you think it is sufficiently precise to bring up this *berger* of Herefordshire from his flocks and his cider-press. If not, I must add a postscript."

The letter run thus—

"Dear Cōrydon,

"I am inexpressibly sorry to feel myself under the necessity of breaking in upon your rustic existence, in which, without doubt, you are enjoying that *otium cum dignitate* for which

so many great men sigh. But stern necessity obliges me to remind you that the day on which you complete your twenty-sixth year, and consequently attain your second majority, is the seventh of next month. Now be it known to you, most gentle shepherd, that however much the innocent joy of disporting in your flowery meads may have lapped your senses in oblivion of all such vulgar matters, I have not forgotten that there are sundry accounts to be settled between us on this occasion. Very seriously, my dear fellow, I must tell you, that however erratic and poetical you may be, my habits of business are too regular to permit my putting off such a settlement as this ; and I must beg of you, Arthur, to let me see you for the purpose of getting through this business on the eighth. It can make no great difference to you, Dalrymple, whether you are up a few days earlier, or later, but I love regularity in all matters of business too well to admit of any delay in this, without serious uneasiness. Clara has promised to engage a singing water-party for me some day between the seventh and

twelfth, for which you may come in if you will be good and punctual. But very seriously I request you not to fail me on the eighth."

* * * * *

"Is it possible that I have been tormenting myself thus dreadfully for nothing!" thought Clara, as she folded up the letter with a sensation of delight that seemed to repay her for all she had suffered. That she had wronged her father by her suspicions, she now felt certain, and that she must now see Dalrymple again, appeared to be certain too, so that a greater difference of feeling between the evening and the morning could hardly have been produced by any possible concurrence of circumstances that could have befallen her.

The letter was sent, and the days flew rapidly away. Sir George's fine spirits seeming to increase as the day for Dalrymple's return approached, of which event he had been assured by a friendly obliging letter received by return of post, and exhibited at the breakfast-table with all the cordial satisfaction felt by a warm-

hearted man on the near arrival of a favourite friend.

Yet notwithstanding all this "measureless content," Sir George Meddows still continued at intervals to show symptoms of one of the most violent coughs that ever was heard. When the fit seized him, indeed, he was generally obliged to leave the room, always declaring on his return that it was better to suffer alone than to make others suffer also by hearing him. Though not of a constitution or form to make any attack of the kind alarming, inasmuch as his breadth of chest was concerned, Clara began to talk of the necessity of his seeing a physician; and was the more disposed to believe this necessary, from perceiving that her aunt, who was usually the last to pay attention to any body's indisposition but her own, began to look very grave, and to declare that it was absolutely necessary he should take advice.

"Let me send for Dr. Stapleton, papa," said Clara, eagerly.

"Upon my honour, Clara, I won't see him if you do," replied the baronet very decidedly;

though showing at the same time, by a violent access of his malady, that he was in great need of some curative process by which to get eased of it, for it was really frightful to hear him.

“And why not, brother?” said Mrs. Longuëville in a voice which expressed something approaching resentment at his refusal. “You must be aware that your complaint is not one which can be safely trifled with. You owe it to your daughter to see Dr. Stapleton without an hour’s delay, and I must positively insist upon your doing it.”

“Surely, Amelia, I can owe to no one the submitting to see a man I particularly dislike,” replied Sir George in the fretful accent of suffering. “If you really think my life in danger, let me see the physician who attends the Wilsons. I know he attended one of them in a complaint upon the lungs, and was thought to have saved his life. I should greatly prefer that man to the prig Stapleton.”

“Do you know his name, papa,” demanded Clara, anxiously.

“He is a German,” replied her father, “and

his name is Batemonn. But if I must submit to this detestable sort of discipline, I had better write to Wilson, and get him to send this Dr. Batemonn here, than be forced to see any one else."

This proposal being approved by both the ladies, was immediately acted upon, and in less than an hour a middle-aged gentleman, with a brown wig, and a pair of prodigiously thick eyebrows, stood beside the couch of the invalid. The ladies retired, and awaited the call that the physician promised them in the drawing-room, with much seeming anxiety, which, on the part of Clara, at least, was not only sincere, but very serious, for never had she seen her father appear so seriously ill.

The visit of the physician was rather a long one, and when it was over, the doctor entered the drawing-room with an air of so much gravity that Clara, for the first time, became really alarmed, and awaited his verdict almost in trembling.

"I find your fader moche dangerous, yong ladé," he said, placing himself in a chair beside

her. "His longes are vary bad state, vary bad indeed!"

Clara was greatly affected, and drew forth her pocket handkerchief; Mrs. Longuéville immediately did the same.

"Be not toe moche cast down, my charming yong ladé—nor you neider, mein good frow," resumed the kind physician. "Dere is hop, vary great good hop, if de patient will do at vunce, at vunce observe, all dat I am going to see fit to order."

"I trust that as my father has consented to see you, Dr. Batemonn, he will consent also to follow your prescriptions. And as to every thing respecting diet, and the regularity of administering his medicines, you may depend upon having the most accurate attention paid to your orders," said Clara.

"My dear yong ladé, your fader is a veri happy fader to have so goot a child. Bote it is not de medicaments vat vill cure him. It is de change of air—noting bote de change of air will shave his life," replied the doctor with great solemnity.

“Do you think that it is necessary for my father to go to a southern climate, sir?” demanded Clara.

“No! By no means at dis moment is it necessary dat Seer George should quit de kingdom. Bote it is London—it is de business and de bustle dat he most quit. All business vill be death. I quit him in de moment if he not promises to abstain from, and give up, all thought of business for de next five or six months. I will send him to Brighton, dat is de particular place I will send him to.”

The doctor then took his leave, and the moment after she received a message from her father, desiring to see her.

“My dear girl!” said Sir George, in a gentle and subdued voice, as she entered his room, “it is plain from what Dr. Batemonn says, that he considers me in a very precarious state. But do not look so sad about it, my dear Clara; he tells me there is hope, if I will but faithfully adhere to his instructions, and this I will do, Clara. No man knows the value he puts upon his life, till a moment arrives in

which he feels that he is in danger of losing it. I believe that upon all former occasions, I have been rather a troublesome patient for you, dear Clara ; but I feel now that it is no time for jesting, and I shall most scrupulously obey this man's instructions, let them be what they will."

"He seems to wish that you should go immediately to Brighton, papa."

"And to Brighton, Clara, I shall immediately go. And I will confess to you that I attend to this prescription the more readily because it is so perfectly disinterested. By keeping me here, he might get a guinea a day out of me for months to come ; but by sending me off he can get nothing but the consciousness that he is doing his duty. I begged hard, however, for a fortnight's delay on account of dear Arthur's business ; but he would not hear of it, and has actually made me give him a solemn promise that I will not even sign my name for the next five or six months without his express permission. He says my life hangs by a thread, Clara, and if it be a weakness, I must e'en plead guilty to it, for I have given the promise demanded."

“ You would have been very wrong to refuse it, my dear sir, and the more so as I shall be always near to act as your secretary,” said Clara.

“ True, my love ! This is a great comfort, and I assure you I did not forget it when I gave the promise. But though you will be able, my dear child, to do every thing for me in the way of notes and letters, unfortunately, you can do nothing in the way of business, and all this sort of work must therefore of necessity stand over till I am in a fitter state to transact it. Your office, dearest Clara, must begin directly, for you must sit down at once, and let Dalrymple know the state I am in, and the discipline to which I am obliged to submit. To him I dare say this will be a great convenience, for it is evident he does not think it worth while to come to town for the mere purpose of settling the trifle between us ; but to me the delay is a dreadful bore ; for with my regular habits of business, it is the greatest possible annoyance to me to suffer any thing of the kind to remain unconcluded a moment longer than is neces-

sary. Write to Dalrymple, will you, my dear, —directly?"

It would be difficult very precisely to define the feelings with which Clara sat down to perform this task. To put off any thing which gave her the chance of seeing Dalrymple was decidedly painful. And to a consciousness of this she pleaded guilty to herself rather more readily than might have been expected from her maiden dignity. Was it that she preferred accounting for the repugnance she felt at telling Dalrymple that the settlement between him and her father was to be delayed to any cause rather than acknowledge to herself the vague, dim, shadowy, and indistinct, but most terrible suspicion that this delay, however desirable, was not absolutely necessary? That some such thought was in her head is most certain. And it is certain, too, that she felt faint and sick at heart as the hateful idea pierced through all the obstacles she could muster to repel it. Yet, with all this, she could not find herself, pen in hand, about to subscribe her name to a paper which was to meet the eye of Dalrymple, with-

out a thrilling emotion that had, after all, more of pleasure than of pain in it.

The letter was sent, and received a civil, cold, and cautious answer. There was sorrow for Sir George's illness—indifference concerning the delay—gratitude for her obliging attention in writing to him—but not a line, a word, a syllable which showed the slightest interest in the person he addressed. Below the signature, and the place where postscripts are usually accommodated, there was an erasure—a neat, careful, and, alas! most effectual erasure. How many moments did Clara waste in endeavouring to discover any single word that might have been written there? It was all in vain! Not a single letter could be decyphered; and yet the very sterile fact, that something had been written there which he did not, upon reflection, deem it proper, or advisable, or prudent to send, gave her a degree of pleasure which proved too well that she was any thing but “fancy free.”

Three days after the receipt of Mr. Dalrymple's answer, the family set off for Brighton

where Sir George Meddows recovered his health with such wonderful rapidity that he determined upon remaining there till the first week in December.

Ill as he was before he left town, he had a long conversation with Charles Chesterfield, in which it was settled that the young man should for the present continue in London that he might not be interrupted in his rapid advance towards fame by withdrawing himself from the immediate protection of Mr. Marchmont, but he was invited when the London season should decline, to pay a visit to his friends at Brighton, and moreover Sir George exacted as a promise from him that he would not return home without letting him know of it.

“Hitherto, my dear boy,” he said with every demonstration of affection, “hitherto my most sanguine predictions respecting you have been fully verified, and I naturally feel anxious that you should take no step now, without my concurrence, for I have great things in my head for you, Charles. I shall not be satisfied till I see you established, not only as a popular author,

and a favourite lion, but also as a gentleman of easy fortune, and feeling yourself perfectly on an equality with all with whom you associate. But you must not let your account with Mr. Marchmont run on too long. He has been so remarkably kind in taking you about with him, that it would not have done to press him for money just at first, but I hope you will come to Brighton, Charles, with your pockets full. Party-giving will be very soon over now, and then you must speak to him seriously about settling with you."

The young man promised to bear in mind every thing he said, and they parted with greater appearance of affection and confidence than either party had ever exhibited before. But though Charles most gratefully felt at the very bottom of his heart that he owed all the greatness he had achieved to Sir George Meddows having brought him up to London, he meant not to be so sensibly obedient as to run the risk of offending the man upon whom his continued appearance before the eyes of the public depended. He felt sure that for the rest of his life it was im-

possible he should ever want money, and remembering how rapidly the months were passing away, and how very soon he should be in possession of his fortune, he smiled at the idea of dunning the Regenerator for a few contemptible tens, when he should so speedily be lord of many hundreds.

Notwithstanding a great deal of very kind feeling on both sides, Miss Meddows and her rustic admirer actually parted rather with pleasure than pain. The young lady felt inexpressibly relieved by an arrangement which served to prove that her father had no intention whatever of borrowing his little fortune; and Charles, though still thinking her the very personification of all loveliness, and though still very comfortably persuaded that he had found considerable favour in her eyes, nevertheless saw her depart with satisfaction. For Charles was entangled; and the friendly confidential tone in which she often talked to him, and enquired after his "whereabouts" and pursuits, embarrassed him sometimes exceedingly. He did not like to tell Miss Meddows that Mrs. Sherbourne wept upon his

bosom whenever he visited her after a whole day's absence, and that if he had remained two without seeing her, he should have almost feared for her life. Nor would he have had the least satisfaction in mentioning that he had already paid 19*l.* 17*s.* 4*d.* for a variety of little things which she had longed to receive from his hands. Still less perhaps would he have had any pleasure in stating to her in reply to her friendly predictions of his being, by and by, happily settled in the country, that Mrs. Sherbourne had recently declared that if he did not make her his wife as soon as he came of age, she should decidedly commit suicide. Upon the whole, therefore, Charles handed her into her carriage without that little pang at the heart which is often felt when those part who have found pleasure in being together—even when no “love passages” have occurred between them.

Left at perfect liberty to do what he liked, and to go where he chose, without even the slight restraint occasioned by the passing questions—“Where did you spend your evening?”

or "Whom have you seen to day?" our hero may be supposed to have felt himself very comfortably at ease; but in this case, as in many others, the obvious inference would not be the true one. Like St. Paul, he found his freedom to be of a very doubtful nature, and often did it happen to him that "what he would, that did he not," and *vice versa*. There are no chains, perhaps, more galling, and few so strong, as those twined round and round and round a very young man by such women as Mrs. Sherbourne. Their force consists not either in their tightness or tenuity, but in the tangled nature of the meshes into which the light links are thrown, forming bonds utterly inextricable to unskilled hands, and demanding more courage to cut asunder than is often found in the class of persons chiefly subjected to their thralldom, till a good deal of lingering suffering has made them desperate.

Many a diplomatist, accounted passing skilful in his trade, might have taken a lesson from Mrs. Sherbourne's method of managing her *relations* with the various and often conflicting

interests with which she had to deal. It was absolutely necessary for her well doing and well being, that Mr. Marchmont, who continued to pay her frequent visits, should perceive that she was gradually and gloomily approaching day by day to the moment that was to be for her "the end of all here," when, by the unflinching action of her steadfast will and ready hand, she should "put off this mortal coil," and place in his hands the marketable commodity of a gay life's record, with the piquant blasphemy of self-destruction at the end of it.

To Chesterfield, whose visits were not only frequent, but daily, it was equally necessary to show herself full of life and love, of hope and joy—with no other malady than the sweet torment caught from Cupid's dart, and no deeper sorrow than his caresses could assuage and his devotion cure. From "her dear Public," and her friends at large, both these states of mind were to be concealed with quite as much care as they were respectively to be exhibited to the individuals already mentioned; yet all these seemingly incompatible duties she performed

regularly, steadily, and effectually, without even permitting either to interfere with the others.

If by some *mal-à-propos* accident, absolutely unavoidable, Mr. Marchmont and Charles met at her lodgings, she contrived to make each feel, without any mixture of doubt on the subject, that she most heartily wished the other away. When she smiled and spoke with gentle gaiety to Chesterfield, Marchmont immediately comprehended that she was exerting a most extraordinary degree of resolution in order to conceal from him the inward darkness of her melancholy death-desiring soul ; and when she permitted a glance, gloomy as a midnight storm, to darken her fair face as she looked at her literary executor, her youthful lover sympathized with the unconquerable feeling which made her deem any interruption to a *tête à tête* with himself, intolerable.

If, as it often happened, she found herself *en face* to both, and to an admiring circle besides, she varied her trickery from vivacity, which, while it enchanted the crowd, caused secret admiration at her extraordinary self-con-

trol in her two initiated friends—to a languor, which, though it made her recline with eyes half shut, and a flacon at her nose, permitted her to assume every possible position by which a foot, a hand, and a world of drooping ringlets could be best displayed, and at the same time it gave occasion to the most satisfactory commentaries in the minds of those more particularly concerned as to the feelings so evidently overpowering to her.

And thus the London season wore away, till nobody seemed to have courage enough to confess that they intended to remain in it for another hour—yet some few persons were obliged to linger there, nevertheless; and Mr. Marchmont, Mrs. Sherbourne, and Charles Chesterfield were among them.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



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